QUIESCENCE AND PASSION

The vision of arunakiri Tamil mystic

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Translation with Introduction and Notes

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FRED W. CLOTHEY

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The vision of Arunakiri
Tamil Mystic

[Translation with Introduction and Notes]

FRED W. CLOTHEY

PUBLICATIONS DIVISION

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FOREWORD

It is often said that translation is literary treason and the translator a traitor. However it is not our aim to accuse Dr. Clothey of treachery for his translation, for there is as much to disapprove the statement as much as to approve. True, everyone knows that translations can never be perfect, but no one misses an opportunity to translate the author whom he likes most. This is evidently because that the urge to translate is a psychological compulsion and necessity. Dr. Clothey's attempt to translate Aruṇakirinātar, one may presume with certainty, is also a psychological necessity for his interest in the Tamil God Murugan goes back to an earlier date when he was a graduate student working on his monumental thesis on Muruga for which the Tamil scholars will be indebted to this foreigner.

Dr. Clothey has prefixed to his translation, a 36 page critical introduction to Aruṇakiri which touches upon history of the text, historicity of the poet's hagiography, areas which are generally ignored by native critics. In his attempt to reconstruct the history of the poet out of the legendary account, Dr. Clothey has wisely been led by internal textual evidences which in fact is highly rewarding. That the poet was the son of a prostitute is doubted on the strength of a reference in Tiruppukaḻ about his mother's good character. Also his extra-marital relationship and his wife's ridicule of his behaviour as pointed out by Dr. Clothey, have valuable autobiographical importance.

The history of Aruṇakiri's revival in the 20th century has been meticulously traced from the year 1871 where V.T. Subramanian Pillai, a Muruga bhakta along with his three sons undertook the mission of collecting the palmyrah leaves containing Aruṇakiri's poems. The role of Saccitananta

Cuvāmi in promoting the popularity of Aruṇakiri's work has also been vividly discussed with fascinating anecdotes.

Translating Aruṇakiri into any other language is a difficult task, for his poems curiously combine music and thought with such an ability that to imitate him in the same language itself is an impossibility. Native critics attribute this rare poetic gift to the grace of Lord Muruga the personal God of the Poet. Clothey's translation, besides being endlessly readable, shows his profound understanding of Kantaranubūti and Kantaralaṅkāram the philosophical depth of the hymns. As one reads the notes to the poems one understands the scholarship of the translator in Indian Philosophy in general and Aruṇakiri's thought in particular. Of course the translator does face certain difficulties in translating some words, as for example, the Tamil 'mala' is translated as 'sin' which can only be a near substitute for the Tamil word and is not synonymous with sin. However what is maintained throughout the translation is spiritual sympathy with the original writer and Dr. Clothey does not go by literal translation which is especially very dangerous with a poet like Aruṇakiri. As for of example a literat translation for 'Cummā iru collara' would be 'be still withoul word'. In that case it would not have conveyed any meaning but Dr. Clothey knowing fully well the implication of 'Collaṟa', translates it as 'thoughtless'. We only wish Dr. Clothey to move beyond his translation of Aruṇakiri and do some more indepth study of Aruṇakiri. It is said that books like men pass through the vicissitudes of fortune and this is especially true with Dr. Clothey's book which though had been written many years ago could not be printed until now.

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G. Vijayavenugopal

Acknowledgements

This volume is a classic example of the kind of project into which fools rush where angels fear to tread. Neither my English nor my Tamil qualifies me to translate poetically a Tamil poet who remains defiantly untranslatable. I can plead only an interest in Aruṇakiri since 1965 when Kamil Zvelebil, then endeavouring to introduce me to good Tamil literature, first induced me to sample the poet's unusual style. I have since come to know even better why none have dared to attempt a translation save in the most prosaic of ways.

I was intrigued, nonetheless, by Aruṇakiri's colorful imagery, and his masterly use of assonance and alliteration to say nothing of his significant role in propagating in medieval Tamil India, the worship of Murukaṉ, a deity whose history and meaning I had been studying for some time. So in 1971 while I was associated with Madurai Kamaraj University as the coordinator for the program then known as the Great Lakes Colleges Association Year-in-India Program, I started to work on Aruṇakiri's two most philosophically terse collections of verse — the Kantaranupūti and the Kantaralaṅkāram — leaving aside altogether his melodious collection known as the Tiruppukaḷ. Mrs. Meenakshi Bharathi, then a research scholar in the Tamil department, was most helpful in working with me on basic images and terms in the poems. Rough translations were then critically examined and revisions suggested by A.S. Gnanasambandan, then Chairman of the Tamil Department of Madurai Kamaraj University.

Upon returning to the United States, I prepared the first draft of an introduction and commentary. Subsequently, other persons have been gracious enough to read the collection or parts of it and offer suggestions. Herbert Mason of Boston University encouraged me to see the project through to publication. A. K. Ramanujan read a

number of the stanzas, which, in turn, were markedly improved by his suggestions. Ms. Barbara Delp Alpern, my teaching assistant at the University of Pittsburgh, offered alternate wordings which I adopted at several points. For several years, the project remained a sort of play thing for me — if my Śaiva friends can forgive me forsputting it that way — inasmuch as I puttered with it more for pleasure than with the intention of ever providing a definitive English rendition of the poetry. The latter is still a task I will leave for someone else. Nevertheless, upon my returning to Tamil Nadu in 1978 as a Fulbright Fellow, Dr. V.A. Devasenapathi, former Professor and Director of the Centre for the Advanced Study of Philosophy at the University of Madras, was good enough to read the entire manuscript and to offer encouraging comments.

Finally, Prof. M. Shanmugham Pillai, former Chairman of the Dept. of Tamil Studies, and Prof. Vijayavenugopal, Director of the Evening College, both at Madurai Kamaraj University, were helpful in proof reading and seeing the manuscript through to final publication. It is hoped the reader will indulge the typographical errors that persist despite numerous proof readings. For any errors of substance it is, of course, I who must bear the responsibility and none of the fine colleagues mentioned above.

This volume, then, is an attempt to introduce to scholars and thoughtful persons in the West, an important poet who has been hitherto virtually unknown outside the Tamil -speaking world. And while these translations are at best blank verse expressed in idiomatic English, they do come with a critical introduction and notes which put the poet's work in some context. It is my hope the reader may at least catch a glimpse of the quiescence and passion of which Aruṇakiri was a master.

Fred W. Clothey
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Introduction

Formed, Formless;
Being Non-being;
Flower, Fragrance;
Jewel, Radiance;
Embryo, Life;
Goal and Way;
Come, Guha, Guru
Grant your Grace.

This stanza, the fifty - first and last of the Kantaranupūti, illustrates as well as any the style and devotional experience of one of Tamil India's most beloved poets - Aruṇakirinātar. Nearly perfect symmetry of alliteration and meter combine with contrasting and complimentary verbal images to evoke a full scope of human emotion and thought in praise of the God Murukan̲.

This stanza, like much of Aruṇakiri's work defies translation. The original Tamil reads this way:

Uruvāy aruvāy (Formed, formless)
Uḷatāy ilatāy (Being, Non - being)
Maruvāy malarāy (Fragrance, flower)
Maṇiyāy oḷiyāyk (Jewel, luster or radiance)
Karuvāy uyirāyk (Embryo, life)
Katiyāy vitiyāyk (Way, destiny or goal)
Kuruvāy varuvāy aruḷvāy Kukan̲ē
(Guru, Come, Grace [give] Guha)

Explicit in this stanza is the way Aruṇakiri weaves contrasting themes throughout his poetry. He often uses a medium appropriate for music and dance to express philosophical ideas. Concrete images which evoke human passion speak of the quiescent wordlessness of cosmic and abstract truth. Form embodies formless reality. Two words taken together, like flower and fragrance or jewel and radiance, speak not only of God's concreteness and pervasiveness but also of the religious experience in which God and devotee come together in an inseparable ambiance in a manner consistent with the vision of Śaiva poets.

Aruṇakiri is Tamil Śaiva mystic-poet whose verses are widely sung in Tamil India today. A product of the fourteenth or early fifteenth century, he was a skilled musician, best known for his use of meter and rhythm as dance accompaniment. As such he was a significant figure in the artistic life of South India in the Vijayanagar period. More than that his work served to link the thought of classical Śaiva Siddhānta to folk and indigenous expressions of religion. He is the most prolific hymnist of the God Skanda-Murukaṉ in the history of Tamil Literature. Yet his poetry is eclectic knitting together the mythology of much of the Hindu pantheon. His verses combine conceptual and experiential, metaphysical and mythic, abstract and particular, austere and sensuous, Sanskrit and Tamil, Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava motifs. As a result, his role in the religious life of medieval South India appears to have been more considerable than generally has been believed outside the Tamil World: as a popularizer of religion, as the harbinger of a resurgence of *bhakti* in the post-Cōḷaṉ South, and, not least of all, as an exponent of a Tamil self-consciousness after a peiod of considerable Sanskritization.

The rediscovery of Aruṇakiri within the past century tells us a lot about the mood of religion and art in Tamil India in recent years. Considered a skilled, but relatively

obscure musician by the turn of the century, he has since been "adopted" by musicians, swamis, and populace as a model of Tamil hymnody, religious insight, and human sensitivity. His popularization throughout Tamil India reflects the persistent celebration of the experiential and aesthetic in Tamil Śaivism, an affirmation on non-brāhman piety and leadership, and a resurgence of interest in Tamil music and *belles letters*. In short, persons from virtually all spectra of life in Tamil India have come to acclaim Aruṇakiri as the paradigm of the Śaiva *bhakta*.

His Life and Thought

His life : *Legend*

Who the poet called Aruṇakirinātar actually was and when he lived is still difficult to ascertain There is a traditional legendary account of his early life, known and assumed by many Tamilians and passed on from generation to generation, based on the earliest written work on the life of Aruṇakiri a romantic poetic treatise entitled *Aruṇakirinātar suvāmikaḷ purāṇam*. This "biography" is said to have been written around 1865 by a saint called Taṇṭapāṇi suvāmi (and also known as Murukatāca suvāmikaḷ).[1] This legendary account includes the following elements with minor variations.

Aruṇakirinātar is said to have been born and to have lived for most of his life in Tiruvaṇṇāmalai in North Arcot district on the Northern fringes of Tamil country. He was born, according to the legend, of a courtesan or temple prostitute named Muttu. As a young man he lived the life of a profligate, delighting in the company of prostitutes and cheap friends. His inheritance was squandered by the time he reached manhood so he turned for help to his sister, Āti, who was very fond of him despite his weaknesses. He took advantage of his sister's affection and had soon exhausted her possessions—

– jewels, money and property — as gifts for his prostitutes

By now Aruṇakiri's body had lost its youthful vitality and was diseased. The better class of courtesans began to shun him and make fun of him, but his lust persisted. Yet again, he turned to his sister for funds, even though she had nothing left to give save the clothes on her back. She said to Aruṇakiri, in effect: "If your lust is so irresistible, then here's my body. Use it to satisfy yourself."

His sister's words hurt Aruṇakiri deeply. In recognition of the miserable state to which he had come, he had no recourse but to end his own life. Accordingly, he climbed the northern Kopuram of the Tiruvaṇṇāmalai temple intending to jump to his death. But at that moment the God Murukaṉ appeared as an old man, touched Aruṇakiri's tongue with a lance and said: "Sing" *(Pāṭuṅkaḷ)*. A torrent of verse rushed from Aruṇakiri's lips, the first line of which was composed and uttered by Murukaṉ himself [2]

History

While several elements of this account cannot be documented historically, some parts of the account are nonetheless based on allusions in the corpus of poetry ascribed to Aruṇakiri. For example, the poet refers frequently to his intense desire for women. Some commentators contend that the poet describes experience with women only as a "ploy" even though he never had such experiences himself; that is he mentions sexual experience merely to identify with "common man" who does indulge in such behaviour. This devise is, said to be consistent with the custom of Ālvars and Nāyanmārs, earlier devotional poets. In this way some authors attempt to preserve the relative sinlessness of the poet.[3] However, this interpretation does not do justice to the obviously genuine anguish that Aruṇakiri conveys when he describes his being

torn between an intense passion for women and a longing for release from all sense experience. Aruṇakiri does refer quite often to the North tower of the Tiruvaṇṇāmalai temple as the place where he received the grace of Murukaṉ[4] Whether he was in fact the son of a courtesan is doubtful because he refers to his parents, wife, and other relatives[5] and to his mother as having good character.[6] The allusions to his wife indicate he was married, and at least one passage suggests his interest in prostitues persisted even after his marriage, for his wife is said to ridicule him for it (Tiruppukaḻ 392).

Whether historical or symbolic, the experience at Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, signifies the blossoming of a productive poetic and devotional life He must have spent some years as a wandering mendicant, especially in Tamil country because he extols in his poetry over two hundred of the sites where Murukaṉ is said to have made himself manifest including such familiar ones as Tiruccentūr, Tirupparaṅkuṉṟam, Paḻani, Cuvāmimalai, Tiruttaṇi, Vaḷḷimalai, Tiruccenkōṭu, Citamparam and Cīrkāḻi.

The dating of Aruṇakiri's life is still uncertain despite much discussion,[7] but internal evidence suggests that the poet lived somewhere between the start of the fourteenth century and the middle of the fifteenth century. Several allusions in his poetry suggest this The Tiruppukal 1056 refers to one Pirauta Tēvarāya. Even though several Vijayanagar kings assumed the title Tēvarāya, the title appears to be used most frequently in the inscriptions of Pirauta Tēvarāya II, who ruled between the years 1422 and 1446.[8] It is possible this king was Aruṇakiri's patron because Aruṇakiri is thought to have invoked an appearance of Murukaṉ to please Pirauta Tēvarāya[9].

Other passages suggest the poetry is compiled late in the fourteenth century. For example, Tiruppukal 828 refers to a pious person named Cōmanāta. In Putūr, near Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, an inscription dated 1370 records that Vīra Bokkaṉārāya or Bokkaṉ I who reigned from 1355 to 1377, bestowed mahantship on one Cōmaṉāta Jēyār, also known as Ammayappa.[10] This may be the same Cōmanāta mentioned in the Tiruppukal and may have been a saint known to Aruṇakiri in his youth. In other passages, Aruṇakiri describes his times as a period of political confusion when army commanders usurpedch ieftainships of territories as rulers became decadent This allusion is not precise enough to establish the dates because it could describe any number of circumstances from the mid-fourteenth to the mid-fifteenth centuries. Still, at least one scholar, Swami Anuananda, believes this description of political confusion may refer to circumstances around Tiruvaṇṇāmalai during the latter part of the fourteenth century after Bokkaṉ I ruled a large area around Tiruvaṇṇāmalai between 1355 and 1377. Bokkaṉ, however, is said to have lost some of his power even before his death to his commander-in-chief Tirumallirāta or Irāyaṉārayaṇā Campūvarāyaṉ [11]

There is still another hint to suggest that Aruṇakiri lived during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century. A persistent tradition claims that he was a contemporary of Villiputtūrār According to this tradition Villiputtūrār, author of the Tamil version of the Mahābhārata, challenged Aruṇakiri to a contest in the extemporaneous composition of poetry. Parts of Aruṇakiri's Kantarantāti are said to have won that contest for Aruṇakiri Tradition goes on to say that Villiputtūrār later wrote a commentary on the Kantarantāti If there is any truth to this tradition, it is worth noting that Villiputtūrār referred to a ruler named Varapati Āṭkoṇṭāṉ, a figure identified by some scholars with Meykaṇṭāṉ Kaliyukarāyaṉ who assumed the rulership of a portion of the

Tirunelveli Chieftain's province in 1422.[12] Villiputtūrār is also said to be a contemporary of Irattaiyar, a name held in common by an uncle and nephew, both poets of some merit, who had sung about Tirumalai, the commander-in-chief in Tiruvaṇṇāmalai in the late 14th century.[13] All these bits and pieces taken together suggest the poet who becomes known as Aruṇakiri wrote for a period falling somewhere between 1350 and 1445.

Be that as it may, any attempts to identify Aruṇakiri with a demonstrable historical person have been unconvincing. Many who know the tradition about Aruṇakiri's life have assumed that the poet was non–brāhmaṇ. Certain allusions in the poetry tend to suggest this. It seems the poet was a consumer of meat as suggested by Tiruppukaḻ 26 and that he had condemned brāhmaṇs for the sacrifice of goats in sacrificial rituals (Kantarantāti 31). Nor was Aruṇakiri reluctant to criticize those who do not "practice what they preach" or "share their wisdom with those who ask" (Kantaralaṅkāram 6).

On the other hand, brāhmaṇ scholars have suggested an alternate possibility: that Aruṇakiri is descended from some eight Kauta brāhmaṇ families brought from Benares by a Koṇṭa Rājēntiraṉ Cōḻa and settled in Mēṭṭaipaṭṭi There are inscriptional-literary references to certain persons alleged to be members of this family, who were known as Tiṇṭima Kavis. One such Tiṇṭima Kavi, mentioned in a text called Vipaka Patra Mālā, is said to have been famous, to have had the name Aruṇakirinātar, and to have received the title Sarva Pauma Tiṇṭima Kavi from Pirauta Tēvarāya.[14] However, this Tiṇṭima Kavi was apparently born in 1299, and the Pirauta Tēvarāya mentioned is apparently an earlier figure than the fifteenth century one. The author of a later text, the *Caluva-pyutāyam* then speaks of his own father as a poet revered by Cēraṉ, Cōḻaṉ and Pāṇṭiyaṉ chieftains. These brāhmaṇ historians deduce that this poet was the grandson of the earlier Aruṇa-

kiri and the author of the Tiruppukal̲ and the other works[15] Similarly, an inscription dated in 1550, refers to the giving of land by a brāhman̲ woman to a temple of Aṇṇāmalainātar so that she might earn merit for herself and her husband whose name was Kumāra Tiṇṭima Aṇṇāmalainātar. The inference is that this Aṇṇāmalainātar was one and the same as Aruṇakiri, who as one scholar puts it: "must have become famous enough" by then to warrant such acclaim.[16] It is further said that one of these Tiṇṭimas was a poet-laureate during the reign of Pirauta Tēvarāya.[17] Moreover, the brāhman̲ argument continues, if Aruṇakiri had been a Kauta brāhman̲, he would have been entitled to eat certain kinds of meat and would have been unafraid to attack the sacrificial excesses; this hypothesis would also explain why he had such admirable command of Sanskrit language, knowledge of Sanskrit literature such as Vasiṣṭha (Tiruppukal̲ 432), and insight into the ritual life of brāhman̲s[18]. The attempt to identify Aruṇakiri with one or the other of the Tiṇṭima Kavis cannot be dismissed out of hand. A number of the Tiṇṭima Kavis do bear the name Aruṇakiri. The Mullaṇṭiram document known as the Vipaka Patra Mālā, even though its authorship is probably not prior to the seventeenth century, does refer to a "famous" Aruṇakiri, born in 1299. And an inscription dated 1340, refers to a gift by one Campantan̲ to the Tiruvaṇṇāmalai temple; the gift is attested by some ten people whose names are signed, including one Cōmanātatēva and one Aruṇakiri Ciyan̲.[19] These are names which occur in the life of Aruṇakiri, suggesting it is at least possible our Aruṇakiri lived somewhere in the first part of the fourteenth century.

Yet the attempt to identify Aruṇakiri with one of the Tiṇṭima Kavis is not conclusive. The inscriptional and literacy inconsistencies persist and dates as widely divergent as 1299 and 1550 are cited. Nor is there any definitive proof that thr Pirauta Tēvarāya to whom Aruṇakiri refers is any one

other than the Vijayanagar king who reigns from 1422-1447. Moreover, it is clear that one did not need to be brāhmaṉ to know Sanskrit in the Vijayanagar era. Nor is any one of the Tiṇṭima Kavis known to be a devotee of Murukaṉ. In fact, it is striking that much of Aruṇakiri's music had been preserved in the families of *piḷḷai*-s and *tāci*-s. But, whatever his caste background, Aruṇakiri's spirit is far from parochial; his poetry is addressed to all men and in the spirit of Everyman.

The corpus of poetry currently ascribed to Aruṇakiri-nātar may be the work of more than one person. The historical discrepancies that persist suggest that may be a possibility. Moreover, it is quite probable, from the content of several stanzas in the Kantaralaṅkāram — for example stanzas 101-108 —that a later hand has been at work, adapting the meter of the main body of the poetry and substituting an inferior message. Furthermore the possibility cannot be ruled out that the Tiruppukaḻ may have been written by a different poet or poets than were certain of the other poems ascribed to Aruṇakiri. To be sure, there are enough similarities to suggest a single authorship: the skillful use of sound and meter, the rhyming of initial syllables, the vivid imagery, the henolocotheism and exultation in Murukaṉ. Yet certain stylistic and substantive differences are also apparent; the Kantaranupūti and Kantaralaṅkāram are much less committed to metrical precision than much of the Tiruppukaḻ and, in substance, tend to suggest a more nearly mature and conceptual religious awareness. Nonetheless, until more persuasive evidence is available we shall assume most of the poetry ascribed to Aruṇakiri is indeed the work of a single poet who grew in skill and maturity over the course of several decades.

Poetic and Musical Style

Aruṇakiri's genius is particularly evident in his style Sometimes it seems as if the medium takes precedence over the message. With the possible exception of Kampaṉ, there is perhaps no more skillful user of formalistic canons in Tamil literature Aruṇakiri's special gift is the use of meter, sound, and imagery, but especially of meter. Unfortunately, his use of meter and sound are virtually impossible to reconstruct in translation. That is one reason perhaps why Aruṇakiri's work remains unread in the non-Tamil world.

Aruṇakiri of course, follows certain conventions found in most Tamil *bhakti* poetry. Alliteration, for example, is present in many poets. *Mōṉai* (the repetition of sound in the first syllable of each line); and *etukai* (alliteration in the second syllables) had been used in earlier Tamil poetry Yet, Aruṇakiri can become extravagant in his alliterative style. The best-known illustration of this phenomenon is the fifty-fourth stanza of the Kantarantāti in which it̲ is the only consonant used throughout; Kantarantāti 54 reads as follows in Tamil :

titattattat tittattit itātaitātatuttittattitā
titattattattittatitittittatētuttutittitattā
titattattattittattaitātatitētutaitātatatatu
titattatt attittittitītītititutitītottatē

Of course, the poet's use of alliteration is not always this extreme. Yet, it is not unusual for Aruṇakiri to begin every word in a line or even in a couplet with the same letter. It is not unusual for every line of a stanza to start with the same phoneme, especially in the Tiruppukaḻ.

Similarly, rhyming in much Tamil poetics occurs at the beginning of each line The rhyming of the first syllable and/or of the second syllable are common in Tamil *bhakti*

poetry. Yet, it is not unusual for Aruṇakiri to rhyme the first four, five, six or more first syllables in each line throughout a given stanza. It is this technique which makes Aruṇakiri vulnerable to the criticism that he takes the medium more seriously than the message. But however much fun he may have in stringing a necklace of homophonous sounds, it is also apparent that for Aruṇakiri sound itself has a religious character. Sound is numinous and cosmogonic in intent Sound is the form of the Divine itself In at least one passage the poet refers to Murukaṉ as he who lives in the *rāka* (tune) which assumes the form of sound [20]

In the use of meter, Aruṇakiri is especially innovative. *Cantam* or metric repetition was a part of South Indian music at least from the time of the folk hymnody recorded in the Cilappatikāram. A form of poetry emerged in the seventh and eighth centuries known as *puyavakuppu*, a poetry which combines folk and literary canons in praise of warrior heroes. In at least one stanza of this poetry, metric repetition is used in such a way as to suggest Aruṇakiri knew of the piece.[21] *Cantam* had been particularly explicit in the poetry of the ninth century Ñāṉacampantar,[22] a poetry which was easily adapted to music. It is interesting that Aruṇakiri frequently refers to Ñāṉacampantar with admiration, speaking of him as an incarnation of Murukaṉ who helped to popularize Śaivism and rout the Jains (Tiruppukaḻ 236, 323, 917). At least one of Aruṇakiri's stanzas in the Tiruppukaḻ (353 starts each line exactly as Ñāṉasampantar had started the lines of a stanza. (III. 67.6)[23]. Later, a twelfth century Cōḻa Court poet named Oṭṭakkūttaṉ uses a rather complex metric pattern in a poem entitled "Takkayākapparaṇi".[24] Hence, there was a persistent tradition in the use of *cantam* in Tamil poetry But in the use and creation of meter, Aruṇakiri goes considerably further than Ñāṉacampantar or any other

earlier poets. It is in the Tiruppukaḻ that Aruṇakiri's metrical versatality is most evident. In that collection the *cantam* pattern is used throughout. *Cantam* is when each line of a stanza repeats the meter of the first line in such a way as to make it musically reproducable without change. In some 1400 Tiruppukaḻ hymns Aruṇakiri experiments with over 850 different metrical combinations, that is, each line of a given hymn retains a consistent metrical pattern, but a different hymn may use a different pattern throughout. For example, in a particular poem in the Tiruppukaḻ Aruṇakiri used a meter of twenty-seven beats, made up of three successive units of five beats each (*Kantaṉ*), two units of three beats (*tiśra*) and a final unit of six beats. Thus the rhythm of each line in that poem is 5-5-5-3-3-6. This is a meter very difficult to recreate, let alone to compose with meaningful verse in the first place. It is the hundreds of such metric combinations that have made Aruṇakiri's compositions musically pleasurable and ingenious and an effective accompaniment to dance.[25]

But meter is more than play in Aruṇakiri's poetry, for, as with other *bhakti* poets, meter has cosmological implications. The poetry's rhythm is the beat of the cosmos. The poet's rhythmic utterances are homologous to the dancing of his God. (Kantaranupūti 17). The varieties of *cantam* are created by the dancing feet of Murukaṉ (Tiruppukaḻ 1269). On some occasions, Aruṇakiri uses the medium of his poetry to enhance its message. One case in point will illustrate how this is done. In Kantaralaṅkāram 92 the poet is describing a battle scene in which the god's lance routs the advancing *cūraṉ*. The staccato beat of thunderous battle is enhanced by the use, no less than twenty-one times, of the phoneme *ṇṭ* (pronounced 'ṇḍ'.) The stanza in Tamil, reads:

toṇṭarkaṇṭaṇṭimoṇṭuṇṭirukkuñcattañāṉameṉun
taṇṭaiyampuṇṭarikantaruvāycaṇṭataṇṭaveñcūr
maṇṭalaṅkoṇṭupaṇṭaṇṭaraṇṭaṅkoṇṭumaṇṭimiṇṭak
kaṇṭuruṇṭaṇṭarviṇṭōṭāmaḷvēltoṭṭakāvaḷṉē

For Aruṇakiri, in no small measure, the poetic medium is a part of his message.

Thought

The system of thought articulated in the poetry of Aruṇakiri is not entirely unique or original, insofar as much that is in Aruṇakiri is consistent with traditional Śaiva thought. Basically, Śaiva thought, as expressed in the Siddhānta tradition, holds that the universal is comprised of three co-eternal realities : *Pati* (God) ; *pacu* (soul ; *pāca* ('bond'). The soul (*pacu*) tends to adhere to *pāca* (bond) to which it is attached at birth, and in which are encompassed all the realities of the phenomenal world, including the three *mala*-s or bonds and the thirty-six *tattuva*-s or categories of existence. The object of religion is to permit the soul (*pacu*) to be freed of *pāca* and become attached to the lord (*pati*). The soul tends to share the qualitative nature of that to which it adheres. Hence, in the religious experience, the soul shares the character of god, and is inseparable from it, almost like two elements becoming a new compound The relationship of the liberated soul (*pacu*) to god (*pati*) is therefore said to be dual, yet inseparable, like music and tune, air and space, life and body, sun and crystal, sunlight and eyesight, flower and fragrance

Aruṇakiri shares this basic belief system and this vision of the religious experience. Yet there are times - as in his description of the religious experience and in his call to compassion for fellow humans that his poetry transcends Śaiva sectarianism and reflects an eclectic religious insight. Indeed, in recent years, Aruṇakiri has been claimed by Advaitins as being one of them. This claim is generally

based on the way occasional clauses in the stanzas are interpreted. Or again, while Murukaṉ is undoubtedly the deity the poet most frequently invokes, in recent years, devotees of the goddess and a few scholars have claimed Aruṇakiri was a Śakta — a devotee of the goddess. The claim is based largely on references in the Tiruppukaḻ, but even in the Kantaranupūti, there are allusions to Murukaṉ's "falling at the feet" of Vaḷḷi (e.g. stanzas 6, 22). Yet these allusions seem, at best, incidental or secondary to the basic Śaiva thought and devotion to Murukaṉ that dominates the Kantaranupūti and Kantaralaṅkāram.

The most striking feature of Aruṇakiri's thought is expressed in terms of a paradox: on the one hand, his exultation in the experience of the Divine — an experience that is supra - sensual and beyond articulation – and, on the other hand, his revelling in the images of the senses to describe the Deity and his experience with the Deity "Be still; think not" the poet hears his beloved god say. Again and again he speaks of the silence of that Space which is primordial and beyond all comprehension. The reader is left with little doubt that the poet has experienced the *summum bonum* of Śaiva religion. The bliss of that experience comes less from severe discipline and philosophical discourse than from the inexplicable grace of the Divine. The religious experience for Aruṇakiri is less technique than it is submission. The insight that the blessed one receives is not conceptual or discursive; it is intuitive and experiential. To be sure, discipline and reflection are needed in order to be sensitized to the Deity's reality and to bring one's whole being into conformity with that truth; yet the grace which woos the soul and instructs it is given by the Divine.

While this religious experience defies description, Aruṇakiri does attempt to speak of it with metaphors and

analogies The poet is most famed for his use of the phrase "*cummāiru*" (Be still!) to describe the religious experience While the phrase may have been used before, for example by Paṭṭiṉāttār in the ninth or tenth century, Aruṇakiri's use of the phrase in more than one context (e g., Kantaranupūti 12 and Kantaralaṅkāram 10) makes it part of the common parlance of the poets after him, including that of Kacciyappar and Tāyumāṉavar. The religious experience, for Aruṇakiri, is to attain a level of awareness that transcends all knowledge, thought and sensory perceptions, yet affords an awareness of all these in a new light. The experience is not unlike what the yogin knew as *dhyāna* or the Zen practitioner called *sartori*.

Aruṇakiri takes the mandate to suspend all conceptualization to be the god's invitation to him personally. He speaks of the experience as the bliss of silence (Kantaranupūti 43) It is THAT which stands in solitary grandeur (*Ibid* , 49) the state beyond all the 36 *tattuva*-s or categories (*Ibid* . 47). To be engulfed by the deity (*Ibid.*, 46) is to lose contact with the world, speech, mind, and intellect Yet the most common of all analogies for the religious experience, not only with Aruṇakiri but with most of the Śaiva poets, depicts religious experience as the wearing of the feet of the deity on the head of the devotee (e g , *Ibid.*, 24. 36) or, less frequently, planting the deity's feet in the "granite mountain" of one's heart (*Ibid* , 6). The feet head analogy expresses the special nature of the religious experience for Saiva Siddhāntins, as the compound Tamil term for devotion *Tātalai* is popularly said to be comprised of two terms : *tāḷ* foot (of god) and *talai* (head of devotee). Whether or not that analysis is etymologically correct, the term conveys with symbolic force the Śaiva conviction that the soul, in the religious experience, does not become one

with deity so much as it remains a distinct but inseparable part of a compound.[26]

This emphasis on the experience of the Divine as the central factor in religion is in accord with the testimony of virtually all the Tamil Śaiva *bhakti* poets. In Śaiva *bhakti* the experience takes precedence over philosophy and ethics and is the foundation out of which the others arise What is new perhaps with Aruṇakiri is his ascribing to his god Murukaṉ the attributes of Ultimate Divinity. Murukaṉ is the fullness of Śivam, the absolute; He is what Śaiva Siddhānta attributes to the nature of *pati*. the Supreme Lord. At the same time, the mythology of a knowable, available, lovable, and concretely manifest Murukaṉ is used in abundance by Aruṇakiri ; the god's specific feats and exploits are recited Aruṇakiri's Murukaṉ is both the Impersonal beyond and the personal deity who appears and performs his wonders in numerous spots throughtout Tamil country. Aruṇakiri's poetry is historically the first after the systematization of Śaiva Siddhānta and the most extensive ever to make Murukaṉ the focus of devotion in a manner consistent with the most reasoned statements of Śaiva philosophy Furthermore, present in Aruṇakiri's eclectic vision of God are certain Vaiṣṇava motifs Consistent with the mood of the fifteenth century when Vaiṣṇavism flourished anew under the Vijayanagars, Aruṇakiri, more than any *bhakta* before him, ascribes to Murukaṉ attributes of Viṣṇu. Most evident is Murukaṉ's being recognized as the son in-law of Viṣṇu by virtue of his marrying the two consorts, who in the medieval mythology of the Skanda-Purāṇa are depicted as daughters of Viṣṇu. Murukaṉ's courtship of Vaḷḷi may also embody a conception of grace frequently associated with the mythology of Kṛṣṇa wherein the deity, by his grace, woos the devotee and calls her to a relationship that transcends all conventional bounds.

Aruṇakiri's description of the deity thus extends over the entire range of imagery available in the speculation of Śaiva Siddhānta and the mythology of Murukaṉ and even beyond. For example, the poet speaks of the god as the teacher of eternal truth (e.g., *Ibid.*, 8, 11, 13, 1?, 20, 36 41, 42. et al.) and as the source of wisdom (*Ibid.*, 17, 28, 50. He is the essence of existence (*Ibid.*, 15) its goal and way (*Ibid*, 51) He is the elixir of immortality (*Ibid*, 28) and the essence of the mantras uttered by the gods (*Ibid*, 20). He is quiescent and unmoving (*Ibid.*, 9), beyond birth and death (*Ibid*, 12) He is being and non-being formed and formless (*Ibid.*, 51), the giver of grace (*Ibid.*, 15, 33) and sustainer of the cosmos (*Ibid*, 6) On the other hand, he is the one who falls at the feet of Vaḷḷi (*Ibid.*, 6, 12,36), who slays the *asura* s (*Ibid*, 3 8, 47) and dissects the mountain (*Ibid*, 9, 24). He is the warrior and lover *par excellence* bedecked with flowers and garlands and girt with bells and anklets (*Ibid*, 38, et al). His feet are fragrant with the millet fields and forests through which he walked (*Ibid.*, 40, 42); he roams beside springs and under waterfalls (*Ibid*, 40); his color is the brilliant red of the sky (*Ibid.*, 30), while he rides the green-blue peacock (*Ibid*, 1) He dispels sorrow (*Ibid*, 49) and overcomes stupidity (*Ibid*, 48) He is the source of all forms of Tamil poetry (*Ibid*, 10) who delights in the songs of the poet (*Ibid*, 29)

But Aruṇakiri is also skillful in portraying the ambiguity of life in the world He celebrates the colorful and sensual images of the world, but at the same time he longs to be liberated of all attachments other than to his god He writes of the laybrinthine character of "lust"; the fact that nobler priorities are perpetually postponed, that the ultimate questions of existence remain unresolved, and that, above all, the possibility of individual liberation is victimized by attachment to the pleasures of sense and desire. He sees the exprience of the divine as a liberating one freeing him from the

enveloping net of *āṇava, māyā,* and *karma* the three Śaiva *mala*-s, a net which gives to Aruṇakiri an overwhelming sense of his own unworthiness.

He is moved therefore to speak of himself in denigrating terms, as one who marvels that the god could have chosen him as a candidate for liberation (*Ibid*., *20*). He confesses that he has dissipated in ignorance (*Ibid* *23*), and swung in the net of lust for women (*Ibid*., *9*). He is the god's poor slave who has wandered aimlessly (*Ibid*., *25*). He wonders if fate has doomed him to love this life (*Ibid*, *27*) and suffer in *māyā* (*Ibid*, *31*). He has been bewitcheed by wealth, home and mental anguish (*Ibid*., *33*), has been consumed on the path of beautiful women (*Ibid*., *34*) He has persisted in his evil, has boasted idly (*Ibid*., *38*), has been fettered by his own lust (*Ibid*., *43*) and has been cut off from salvation by his own mental incompetence (*Ibid*, *50*).

And so the catalog of his own profligacy is multiplied; yet, on the other hand, Aruṇakiri's reader senses that the poet's religion is not the mysticism of sour grapes, for there seems to be a genuine regret clouding the bliss of total submission to the Divine. The poet appears to have enjoyed wordly pleasures. Hedonism was not only a net; it was an intoxicating nectar. Like the alcoholic, he had tasted it and revelled in it. Seemingly, he concluded that the life of pleasure was futile only after years of delighting in it.

Paradoxically perhaps, Aruṇakiri uses the imagery of sensuous love to describe his beloved deity and his experiencing of the deity. In *Kantaralaṅkāram* 6 the poet writes:

Once I tasted the sweetness of that one supernal Bliss
Which grew from true love's
constant contemplation
on Kumāraṉ
who caressed the breast
of the innocent girl

who watched over the millet
in the great green fields;
From that day on
even sugarcane seemed sour
and rich honey wretchedly bitter.

His descriptions and images are vivid and colorful. He does not hesitate to describe the anatomy of women, for whom he has lusted, or to revel in the sights, sounds and smells of his beloved Tamil land. Even in his description of the suprasensory experience of liberating bliss — and perhaps especially in it—Aruṇakiri makes use of sensuous imagery in a manner even more extravagant than is consistently found in Tamil poetry. Everything is intense and vibrant for Aruṇakiri whether it be living a worldly life or experiencing God. His poetry's meter, sonority, and formal style convey the same vibrancy, intensity and joy. In this sense he speaks about, for, and to the humanity of his fellows and especially that humanity which is expressed in the heritage of Tamil literature and life.

Concerning this spirit in Aruṇakiri's poetry Kamil Zvelebil has written that ' it is the poet's reflection of his all-embracing and glowing love for all aspects of life, from inorganic nature to flowers, animals, birds, and finally men—especially women—and from man of course further, to God", and even when the poet is lost in praise to his God, "he is aware of life, of nature, of people of the beauty surrounding him," and his personal deity Murukaṉ himself "can only be glorified in terms of radiant rejoicing, extravagant coloration, and youthful enthusiasm". [27] While this may be somewhat more true of the Tiruppukaḻ than of the more restrained and measured Kantaranupūti and Kantaralaṅkāram, it is nonetheless a spirit that one feels to some degree throughout Aruṇakiri's poetry

There are also other themes in Aruṇakiri's work which are related to the ones considered so far. One of the more significant of these is the poet's capacity to identify with the common man and his call for involvement in their behalf. Not only is his religion not elitist in the sense of including only those with the most intelligence or the most rigorous of techniques, but Aruṇakiri even disdains those who do not share their spiritual insight or welfare with others In one delightful stanza he writes :

Those who say
  the body is but a bubble
    and wealth is as transient as a flash
Yet
  rise and hide
    when accosted by hungry beggars
  are people who have no love
    for Kumāra with the lance.
Their 'wisdom'' is useless.[28]

In Kantaralankāram 20 he writes :

. . . he fruit of your *karma*
  does not let you enjoy your wealth;
If you bury it deep within the earth,
  will it follow you when you are gone?

Frequently he calls for concern for and involvement in the fate of his needier fellows :

That which you give
  to those who beg
    will return to you . . .[29]

Share food——
  be it raw or cooked
    with those who come to you in need . . .[30]

Those who . . .

. . . do not share their wealth
while they have it . . .
will waste their lifetimes
worrying and are shocked
when it is stolen
and pine sorrowfully
for more.[31]

Get two handfuls of rice
give to the needy
and than--
eat and live.[32]

This benevolent attitude, even if it seems somewhat patronizing from the perspective of our own century, is genuine enough, for a sincere empathy with his "common" fellows is evident throughout Arṇakiri's poetry. While compassion is clearly present in Aruṇakiri, it is not unique to him since several before him had called for similar concern Tiruvaḷḷuvar; Tiruñāṉacampantar, Māṇikkavācakar, Auvayyār; Tirumūlar and others. Yet Aruṇakiri's poetry does remind us that the "humanism" and "social concern" sounded in the late nineteenth century by such poets as Irāmaliṅka Cuvāmi and in the twentieth century by such figures as Irāmacuvāmi Nāyakkar are not to be attributed merely to Western influence. There was a persistent tradition of demands for democratization, distribution of wealth, and the welfare of the disenfranchised The surfacing of that concern in the fourteenth and fifteenth century is expressed in the work of Aruṇakiri.

Another feature of the poetry of Aruṇakiri – though again not unique to it—is his respect and even reverence-for the Tamil language, and especially as a language of devotion. There is frequent reference to the literature and language of Tamil as a suitable medium for expression of devotion to the deity.

Tamil is of Murukaṉ and for Murukaṉ As is customary for Tamil devotional poets he sees the god as the source of Tamil poetry (Kantaranupūti 10). The verses which he sings are intended as a garland for the god (*Ibid.*, 1, 29). Tamil speech and especially poetry is the god's dancing on the tongue.

... You, ...
who would embrace truth and virtue
and he rid of ignorance —
let his name dance on your tongue (*Ibid*, 17)

While this romanticization of Tamil may not be original with Aruṇakiri, it is significant that he rhapsodizes about Tamil when Tamil country had been undergoing an extended period of intensive Sanskritization. Many geographical names had been changed from Tamil to Sanskrit By the time of the centralizing agency of the Vijayanagar rulers, Sanskrit had become a virtual *lingua franca* in the South, the language of discourse and culture for many intellectuals Aruṇakiri's poetry itself shows a pleasurable blending of Sanskrit and Tamil terms and sounds, suggesting he was, like many intellectuals in his time, fully comfortable in Sanskrit idiom Yet he especially extols Tamil as the language of devotion, the music of the gods It is fair to say that Aruṇakiri played a significant role in the renaissance of a Tamil romanticism because his poetry was known and copied by later poets and showed metric and rhythmic genius

The thought and total impact of Aruṇakiri's poetry might be seen, in sum, as the warp and woof of constantly interwoven themes His poetry is about God-God the abstract and Wholly Other but also God the concretely manifest who loves and walks about his beloved Tamil land. It is a poetry about the world – a colorful, vibrant pleasurable world, yet a world which drives one to seek out some serene Space beyond the world's vicissitudes and relativities. His poetry is about religious experience — experience which

is supra-sensual and beyond intellectual and ethical categories, yet an experience which can be depicted with sensual and intellectual imageries This poetry describes human experience and delights in humanness, the world of the senses and the celebration of fellow mortals; nonetheless there is a longing to be more than human, triumphant over the ambiguities of serenity and of passion, of stability and of humanity. It is a poetry of quiescence and of intensity; of medium and message work together with varied success to convey the truth about existence. Not least of all, Sanskrit and Tamil nuances are woven together to give the Tamil language and spirit wings of song which carry regional reniscence and pride in to later centuries and into the hearts of the commonest of men.

The Role of Aruṇakiri

Were we dependent on the reports available in Western languages a generation ago, we might conclude that Aruṇakiri was - and deserved to be - an obscure medieval poet. Outside of Kamil Zvelebil, most historians of Tamil literature known in the West had either ignored or quickly dismissed Aruṇakiri K A. Nilakanta Sastri, for example, in his *History of the Tamils* dismisses Aruṇakiri with one phrase : ...' a creator of ditties.''[33] The poet fares a little better in the half-paragraph Sastri gives him in his *History of South India;* therein Sastri writes that Aruṇakiri's Tirppukal is "handled with the utmost skill and characterized by a unique lilt. The diction is highly Sanskritized and the imagery vivid[34]." J Somasundaram Pillai's anthology, which does include a few stanzas of the Tiruppukaḷ rather prosaically translated by V. S Ceṅkalvarāya Piḷḷai, takes the poet somewhat more seriously. In some ten lines devoted to Aruṇakiri, Piḷḷai calls him an 'inspired poet" whose Tiruppukaḷ is "almost in everybody's lips (sic) in Southern India" and is "noted for its devotional fervour and beauty of expression with the musicology of its winsome metres.''[35]

The work of Aruṇakiri has become increasingly well known in Tamil India in the past two or three generations. Before the beginning of the twentieth century his work was preserved and appreciated primarily amongst the Piḷḷais and especially by those musicians who were pipers. In the light of Aruṇakiri's increasing popularity, it is clear that the effect of Aruṇakiri's work is more important than had previously been thought in literary and religious circles. Two or three dimensions of that role are worth highlighting.

The first significant feature of Aruṇakiri's work is its role in stimulating the resurgence of *bhakti* in post - Cōlan Tamil country. If the seventh through the ninth centuries were the golden age of Tamil *bhakti*, then the fourteenth through the seventeenth centuries were its silver age. This is not to say, of course, that no *bhakti* literature existed during the Cōḷa period. The eleven books of the Śaiva *bhakti* canon had already been arranged by Nampi Āṇṭār Nampi around the beginning of the eleventh century.[36] Cēkkiḻār's Periya Purāṇam, the poetic celebration of the eleven canonized *bhakta s* had been composed during the reign of Kulōttuṅkā II (1.33-50) and soon became the twelfth book of the canon. In the next two centuries, however, there was relatively little *bhakti* poetry written in Tamil. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri observes that much of Vaiṣṇava religious literature was being composed in Sanskrit or was so highly Sanskritized as to be available only to a small circle of the literati ;[37] further, much of Śaiva literature had turned to the philosophical explication of Śaiva Siddhānta. It is not until late in the fourteenth century that Tattuvarāyar and Aruṇakiri offer devotional songs in Tamil which have wide appeal to the common man. A new mood is ushered into Tamil country - a mood stimulated in part by the universalizing centralization of the Vijayanagar empire. It is a move toward democratization and leads to an upsurge of folk

involvement in the religious life of the area. This mood is expressed in the enlargement of temples including the addition of *Kolyānamaṇṭapas* or marriage halls, the increased celebration of festivals and the increased use of lay participants in ritual, particularly within Vaiṣṇavism Aruṇakiri, reflecting this new mood, is among the first to sound its tones. Indeed, even K A. Nilakanta Sastri concedes that Aruṇakiri's work became more popular and better known than that of Tattuvarāyar. For the two centuries immediately following Aruṇakiri a growing amount of *bhakti* literature can be found within Śaivism, together with commentaries on the earlier Śaiva Siddhānta works and Tamil Purāṇas. This *bhakti* literature is in many ways related in theme and intent to the *bhakti* literature of the seventh to the tenth centuries, but its authors, of course, are cognizant of the conceptualized formulations of Śaiva Siddhānta. It is a literature which helps once again to provide a vernacular vehicle for the expression of faith

Most particularly, Aruṇakiri's *bhakti* is a devotion to Murukaṉ There can be little doubt that Aruṇakiri's work was a significant factor not only in the persistence of the cult of Murukaṉ during the Vijayanagar era but in its growth and increased popularization in following centuries By linking the deity to Śaiva philosophy in a more thorough going manner than had ever been done before, while at the same time putting the god's name and exploits into Tamil idiom with which more Tamilians could identify, Aruṇakir served at one and the same time to conceptualize the god and to popularize him. In fact, his work is the most extensive celebration of the character and exploits of Murukaṉ in the history of Tamil hymnody.

Thus, Aruṇakiri is significant in the resurgence of Saiva *bhakti* in Tamil India. He popularizes the cult of

Murukaṉ linking that cult to the Tamil country and peoples (or perhaps more accurately, expressing in song the mythical themes already extant in Tamil lore) while at the same time associating the worship of Murukaṉ with the main features of Śaiva philosophy Poets in the succeeding two centuries wrote mythology, speculation and hymns addressed to or about Murukaṉ, but much of the inspiration for these later works derived from Aruṇakiri The most memorable of this material was written in the seventeenth century; for example, Kumārakuruparaṉ's first work, *Kantar Kali Veṇpā*, an exaltation of Murukaṉ that recognizes both the god's abundant mythology and his abstract character as Śivam; the *Kantapurāṇam*, Tamil version of the Sanskrit *Skanda Purāṇam*, written largely by Kacciyappaciva, whose poetic style is largely indebted to Kampaṉ, author of the Tamil version of the Rāmayāṇa; and several forms of *piḷḷaittamiḻ*, addr ssed to Murukaṉ as a child, a style of devotional hymn first used in Tamil before Aruṇakiri but only intimated indirectly in Aruṇakiri's work

While a number of poets were influenced by Aruṇakiri in style and content, few are more indebted than the seventeenth century *bhakta*, Tāyumāṉavar Tāyumāṉavar, in turn, is important because of his links to the modern era, especially through his influence on Irāmaliṅka Cuvāmi, the nineteenth century mystic-humanist-reformer Irāmaliṅka Cuvāmi in turn, was of inspiration to Irāmacuvāmi Nāyakkar and other authors of the modernizingcon cerns for humanism, classlessness and Tamil romanticism. Tāyumāṉuvar was like Aruṇakiri in his blending rhythmically and sonorously of Sanskrit and Tamil idiom, his use of the imageries of nature and life, his describing and renouncing of female sensuality, his use of the rhetorical question to identify truth, and his preference for an experiential rather than an intellectual

awareness of bliss [38] While all these features may not necessarily have been borrowed directly from Aruṇakiri but rather derived from the tradition shared by Aruṇakiri, Tāyumāṉavar does look explicitly to Aruṇakiri as the prototypical Śaiva *bhakti* poet whose experience and description of the silence of the religious experience is especially poignant and profound [39] Further, Tāyumāṉavar, like Irāmaliṅka Cuvāmi after him, also shared Aruṇakiri's identification with Everyman and the concern for improving the lot of the disenfranchised

Aruṇakiri is also important in the way he becomes a harbinger for a resurgence in Tamil self-consciousness. It is not only that Murukaṉ finds growing acceptance as a god with "Tamil" attributes, but that the Tamil language and culture become increasingly extolled in Aruṇakiri's successors. In the praise of Tamil language and literature Tāyumāṉavar and others of his age and after, reveal the Tamil romanticism that seems to have become particularly self-conscious in Aruṇakiri. Tāyumāṉavar extols Tamil as the language of devotion He understands God to be especially attracted to those who weave garlands of Tamil poetry.[40] A similar theme is found in other of the seventeenth century poets. For Parañcōti Muṉivar the Tamil language is sacred : the Tamil poets are God's concern; Tamil land is His favourite resort The same Parañcōti suggested that Śiva had once sat with the Caṅkam poets in order to research his beloved Tamil language In a similar vein, Kumarakuruparar sang that Tamil was the language of Śiva who together with Umā and Murukaṉ, had become incarnate on earth, so that he could taste the sweetness of the Tamil language. This is a spirit not far removed from the regional romanticism found in the twentieth century whether in the poetry of Subramaṇia Pārati or in the rhetoric of Karuṇāniti.

We can speak then of Aruṇakiri as the fore-runner of Tamil romanticism, the father—or perhaps, more precisely,

ancestor of a Tamil renascence. He restates themes which were present in earlier Śaiva poets, but which he brings to new dramatization and focus, and which after him, become part of the self-image of a region on the threshold of modernity. Robert Bellah has observed that modernizing societies are often characterized by "national romanticism" and "radical social change".[41] Intimations of both are to be found in Aruṇakiri if we rephrase the first term to read "regional romanticism". Indeed, that may be one reason Aruṇakiri's songs are popular with so many Tamilians today.

The Twentieth Century Aruṇakiri Revival

As we have noted, Aruṇakiri's poetry has become a vehicle in this century both for the resurgence of *bhakti*. especially among non-brāhmaṉ groups, and for a popular interest and pride in Tamil arts and letters. As indicated earlier, the poetry and musical spirit of Aruṇakiri had been preserved and elaborated into the early decades of this century particularly within families of the Pillai or Tāci communities. But the circle of the poet's admirers has expanded in considerable measure during this century. The life and work of three men in particular can illustrate the way Aruṇakiri's poetry has been explicitly used to capture the popular imagination religiously and aesthetically.

The story of the Aruaṇkiri revival begins, perhaps as much as anywhere, with the inspiration of a chance comment made in a Citamparam courtroom in the year 1871 heard by one V T. Subrahmaṇyam Piḷḷai,. V T Subrahmaṇyam Piḷḷai, as his name suggests, was, like many members of his family before and after him, a devotee of Murukaṉ.[42] Born in Chingleput in 1846, V.T. Subrahmaṇyam Piḷḷai became a distinguished student in Fine Arts at Madras Christian College and then a teacher before becoming an English writer for the court. He was best known for having prepared a guide book of all the holy places

of Śaivism in Tamil Nadu, a booklet which collated references to holysteads found in the poetry of three Nāyaṉmārs or Śaiva *bhakta-s* : Appar, Ñāṉacampantar, and Cuntarar In the year 1871 during certain court proceedings, the young man heard some *Ṭikṣitas* quote the Tiruppukaḻ with admiration. He was inspired to inquire into the nature of the Tiruppukaḻ, found that only a few inexpensive anthologies were available each of which contained only a few stanzas selected from the Tiruppukaḻ. Subrahmaṇyam Piḷḷai determined to enlarge the collection. Together with his three sons he began to collect palmyrah leaves on which stanzas of the Tiruppukaḻ had been written from various families who had been preserving them. By attending small recitals of such Tiruppukaḻ stanzas all over Tamil Nadu the family soon had gathered the first substantive collection of Tiruppukaḻ stanzas. The collection continued to grow until it became definitive. Meanwhile, other poems attributed to Aruṇakiri were also collected. When V T. Subrahmaṇyam Piḷḷai died in 1909, his sons carried on the labour of love, particularly the two eldest, Saṇmukam, who received a B A. in philosophy and Ceṅkalvarāya, who had earned an M.A. in Tamil literature Of these two brothers, Ceṅkalvarāya (born in 1883) chose to give a life time to the collecting and interpreting of Aruṇakiri's work Even as a boy he had shown interest in his father's project and considerable acumen in the Tamil language, eventually placing first in the state in his B A Tamil examination in 1902. He received an M.A in Tamil literature before assuming his career. Throughout that career as an official in the Office of the Inspector-General of Registration, he was an ardent devotee of Murukaṉ. Consistent with the family tradition, he used Aruṇakiri's songs—particularly the Kantaranupūti—in worship, and every month observed the holy days of Murukaṉ : Kṛttikā and Ṣaṣṭi

Ceṉkalvarāya Piḷḷai memorialized his devotion and his labor in the impressive collection of Aruṇakiri's work with his commentary which remains the most extensive collection and commentary on Aruṇakiri in existence. Ceṅkalvarāya consciously sought to have Aruṇakiri's work collated into twelve volumes that they might become for the Murukaṉ cultus a hymnal homologous to the function the Tēvāram fills within Saivism as a whole. The twelfth volume of the collection-the Ceytoṇṭapurāṇam was written at Ceṅkalvarāya's invitation by Cokkaliṅkṇam Piḷḷai to serve the similar function of summation and interpretation served by the Periyapurāṇam in the twelfth volume of the *Tēvāram*.

A second figure in this Aruṇakiri revival, whose life is woven into those of V.T. Subrahmaṇyam Piḷḷai and his son Ceṅkalvarāya is a mendicant saint who became known as Tiruppukaḻ Saccitāṉantaṉ Cuvāmi. His role in the spread of the Tiruppukaḻ's popularity in Tamil Nadu is especially illustrative of the process by which that work h s been, in e fect canonized in this century, both as "scripture" and hymnody particularly in the circles of the religious "elite", that is, amongst brāhmaṉs, swamis, and saints

The life of this swami, as told by his chief disciple, is on this wise Saccitrāṉandaṉ Cuvāmi was born as Artanāri of one Citamparam Aiyar in Pūnācci of Coimbatore District on November 25th, 1870 as the result of circumstances which are considered by his followers to be semimiraculous. At the age of five, when his father died, young Artanāri was sent to live with his uncle who operated a coffee shop in Erode. There at the age of six he received his *upanayaṉa* or initiation and at nine was married to a child bride. The entire family moved to Mysore when Artanāri was nine. In Mysore Artanāri served as an apprentice cook in the palace of the Māharāja for three years and then as a travelling cook for

the next twenty-six years At the age of sixteen, he was given in marriage to a second wife, but by the time he was thirty his first wife had died together with all her children,

It was at the age of thirty-seven, in 1908, that Artāri's life came to its turning point The death of his second wife's two daughters and other factors led him to be increasingly restive with his home life. His personal health also was deteriorating with chronic appendicitis which failed to respond to any of the treatments available in Mysore City. Finally a mason employed at the palace suggested Artāri go to Paḻani to be cured by the God Murukaṉ

In January of 1908 he arrived in Paḻani It was in May of that year during the Agni Nakṣatra festival that he had his first powerful religious experience. Just as the deity Murukaṉ was paraded out of the temple on his peacock vehicle, a *tāci* or temple prostitute sang a stanza from the Tiruppukaḻ extolling the virtues of Murukaṉ on his peacock As the swami's disciples tell the story, Artāri 'experienced a pinching sensation all over his body'' and tears welled in his eyes; he lost consciousness. When he eventually discovered the source of the stanza he determined to learn Tamil and to sing the Tiruppukaḻ. A volume containing the first four hundred stanzas was obtained for him from the V. T. Subrahmaṇyam Piḷḷai family in Madras. For some four years he remained in or about Paḻani learning Tamil, memorizing the Tiruppukaḻ and receiving the appellation "Mysore Swami".

Between 1912 and 1916, the swami travelled somewhat more extensively, visiting pilgrim centres in Tamil Nadu and Ceylon and seeking out religious leaders. He spent some 45 days with one Venkaṭarāyar in Kōyilpaṭṭi, from whom he learned of the Gita He spent some time in Tiruvaṇṇāmalai with Rāmaṇa Mahariṣi whom he thought to be an incarnation

of Murukaṉ. In Tiruvaṇṇāmalai he is said to have had a vision of one Sēṣāttiri Cuvāmi who called him to attain a very high state. In 1913 while at Tiruttaṇi with his wife, singing the Tiruppukaḻ, a vision of still another swami is said to have persuaded his wife that Artāri should be freed to become a caṉṉyāci While singing the Tiruppukaḻ in Tiruttaṇi he also met Ceṅkalvarāya Pillai with whom he became fast friends and in whose home he stayed thereafter whenever he was in Madras. Later still another experience firmed up the swami's resolve to sing and use the Tiruppukaḻ in worship. At Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, it is said, Sēṣāttiri Cuvāmi was talking with him and gave him a blessing from a Sanskri poem ascribed to Śankara. Sēṣāttiri Cuvāmi was explaining the poem's meaning to Saccitāṉantaṉ Cuvāmi, who knew no Sanskrit, when the older teacher asked if the Tiruppukaḻ had any similar stanzas Thereupon, Artāri recited several stanzas, impressing his guru enormously with it Sēsāttiri Cuvāmi is reported to have said :

Tiruppukaḻ is your Mahamantra One who studies Tiruppukaḻ need not read the Vedas and the mantra sastras. Confine yourself to the study and recitation of Tiruppukaḻ. There is no need here after for you to engage in external pūjā. Go and live in Vaḷḷimalai and I shall come there some time[43] 43

The next twelve years of Saccitāṉantaṉ Cuvāmi's life were largely spent in a cave at Vaḷḷimalai. Later, however the swami devoted his life to the singing and exposition of the Tiruppukaḻ for many groups throughout Tamil Nadu He began to sing the Tiruppukaḻ in various *rākam-s* rather than merely in rhythm. He toured North India as well as Tamil Nadu and was instrumental in setting up Tiruppukaḻ *capā s* - music groups committed to the singing of the Tiruppukaḻ – in Delhi. Bombay and Calcutta, and twelve others in Madras City alone. Similar *capā-s* started springing up in numberless towns and villages in Tamil Nadu in large measure

inspired or spawned by the work of Saccitāṉantaṉ Cuvāmi A conference was held in 1944 in Paḻani to discuss ways of co-ordinating the growth of Tiruppukaḻ groups and of further propagating its music and message Saccitāṉantaṉ Cuvāmi was its presiding chairman. By the time of his death in November, 1950, the Swami had witnessed a virtual explosion of interest in his beloved hymns In 1970, a massive musical festival of four days was held at Madras and Vaḷḷimalai as a centennial observance of the birth of Vaḷḷimalai Saccitāṉantaṉ Cuvāmi. Over forty five different Tiruppukaḻ *cupā-s* or musical groups performed in recital, and speeches abounded.

This account, garnished with legend and affection, has been repeated here because it illustrates not only the popularization but also the brāhmaṇization of Aruṇakiri's work. The intent and effect of the Swami's work was to bring recognition to Tamil hymnody - and specifically to the poetry of Aruṇakiri-and to place it on a par in musical quality and sacral experience with hymns in the Sanskrit heritage Thus, at least some religious brāhmans and mendicants in this century have adopted Aruṇakiri's work, to say nothing of Aruṇakiri himself, as expression of their own religious experience and station.

Still another figure in the Aruṇakiri revival gives a slightly different perspective on the story of the rediscovery of the fifteenth century poet in this century..[44] He is a musician, known as "Madurai Somu", a former president of the Madras Academy of Carnatic Music, and a recent rage of the Tamil public "Madurai Somu" is the spiritual and musical exponent of a "school" of musicianship especially given to the development of intricate rhythmic and metric patterns. The tradition starts with Nāyaṉā Piḷḷai, one of the disciples of Tyāgarāja, the famed nineteenth century composer of Carnatic music and Telegu verse. Nāyaṉā Piḷḷai developed one of three major interpretations of Tyāgarāja, an

interpretation primarily skilled in metric nuances. Nāyaṉā Piḷḷai had several disciples, including the Tiruviḻimalai brothers, nātaswaram artists, or pipers, who were skilled exponents of Aruṇakiri's meters. One of Nāyaṉā Piḷḷai's disciples was Cittūr Subramaṇia Piḷḷai, who, among other things, published the Tiruppukaḻ in 1952 with annotations. Not only did he excel as an interpreter of the Tiruppukaḻ but sought to make the entire corpus of that work more nearly available to the other musicians.

In earlier years selected stanzas of Aruṇakiri's work were known to some musicians but were not an accepted part of the reportoire of most musicians. Indeed, Tamil hymnody was still facing resistance amongst orthodox musicians. In 1940 the problem was dramatized. For years a Thyāgarāja festival was held in Tiruvārūr near Tanjavūr every January. The music to be performed was exclusively the work of Thyāgarāja and was in Sanskrit and Telegu. In 1940, Taṇṭapāṇi Tēcikar sang a Tamil hymn causing considerable furore. One orthodox musician was quoted as having said that Tamil music was not fit to sing. The other side, comprised primarily of non-brāhman musicians, for its part, established a rival musical festival at which the work of Aruṇakiri became a regular feature. Ciṭṭūr Subramaṇian Piḷḷai was one of the leading exponents of this resurgent Tamil hymnody.[45]

"Madurai Somu" is the disciple of Cittūr Subramaṇia Pillai. While there is no overt partisanship or bitterness in Somu and he is comfortable singing the compositions of Thyāgarāja, he is most at home while re-creating the music of Aruṇakiri. Aruṇakiri's meter lends itself best to Somu's musical skills, particularly Somu's ability to precisely recreate and interpret technically intricate meters. But there is more than that. Somu's interpretive style includes something of the showman, something of the dramatist. His whole body, though

he remains seated, acts out the music; thus his is a music of the body as well as of the spirit. One cannot help but sense an affinity between Somu and Aruṇakiri, an affinity that is shared with all those who participate in a Somu recital There is an uncommon rapport between the musician and the "audience", a rapport which sweeps up an alert audience into that experience so imaginatively articulated by Aruṇakiri It is an experience that engages one's senses, one's body, as well as one's intellect The audience is moved with the musician both to tears and to that sense of kinship beyond tears and beyond senses and intellect.

It has been said by an American observer that Madurai Somu is the "Mahalia Jackson" of Tamil Nadu. What is perhaps more nearly true is that Somu catches with Aruṇakiri a persistent spirit which characterizes many Tamilians It is a spirit which affirms life and person, which exults in the senses, which makes experience a central mode of awareness. It should not be surprising that these forms of human expression become the imageries of religion, the symbol systems whereby ultimacy is mediated to human kind That seems to be part of the resaon for Śaivism's persistent relatedness to Tamil India. It must be one reason why Aruṇakiri's work is important.

FOOTNOTES :

1. N V Karthikeyan, *Kantharanubhuti of Saint Arunagirinathar* (Shivanandanagar : The Divine Life Society, 1972), p. LVIII.
2. This is taken in large measure from an account written by Sadhu Anuāṉanda in "Arunagirinathar—Traditional View Challenged", for the Indian Express (November 26, 1970), pp 10–11. See also the Tamil booklet : V. S. Ceṅkalvarāya Piḷḷai, *Aruṇakirin tar* (Madras : Liberty Press, 1947), and an article : Kamil

Zvelebil, "Arunagirinathar — Confessor of Beauty," New Orient, IV; 5 (October, 1965), 155 - 56.

3. See for example, N. V. Karthikeyan's comments in G d —Experience", The Divine Life, XXXI, 3 (March, 1969) p 97

4 Tiruppukal̲ 540; Kantaralaṅkāram Invocation; Kantaranuṛū i 3, et. al

5 Tiruppukal̲ 392, 413, 1131.

6 Tiruppukal̲ 690

7 See, for example: Swami Anuāṉanthan, *Saint Arunagirinatha* (Sri Vaisnavi campus Pongi Publications 1975 and his essay "Life of Sri Arunagirinatha" in *Sri Vaḷḷimalai Tiruppukal̲ Saccitāṉanta Swāmikaḷ-in Nūrāvatu Jayanti Vil̲ā Ciṟappu Malar* (Sri Vaiṣṇavi Alayam: 1970); T.S. Parthasarathy 'Sri Arunagirinatha in Legend and History" in *Sri Arunagirinathar Sixth Centenary Volume* (New Delhi: Mattiya Vil̲ā Niṟvākakkul̲, 1975); T.A. Gopinatha Rao's essay in *The Indian Antiquary*, April 1918, pp. 94 100 and May, 1918 pp 125 134; C.K. Narayana Iyer. "The Dindima Poets and Arunagirinatha of Tiruppukal". *Dr S. Krishnaswami Aiyengar Volume* (1936), pp 176—183; A N Krishna Iyengar, "Two Dindima Inscriptions from Mullandram", *Adyar Library Bulletin* Vol V, part 2 (1941), pp. 59 68; 'Dindima Family," *Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute Silver Jubilee Volume* (1942), pp 23—29. Another work frequently cited in the quest for the "historical" Aruṇakiri is M. Raghava Iyengar's *Cāccaṉa Tamil̲ Kavi Caritram*

8 Sadhu Anuāṉanda, op. cit., p. 10. See also K. V Karthikeyan *Kantharanabhuti of Saint Arunagirinathar*, p. LXII. However, in a later essay (1975) Anuāṉanta decides that the Pirauta Tēvarāya to whom Aruṇakiri

refers must be none other than Bokkan I who assumed the Vijayanagar throne in 1355

9 An elaborate myth has accumulated around this alleged incident. In one common variation of the myth, an ardent Jain devotee of the goddess Kalī, named Campantaṉ, challenged the king, who adored Aruṇakiri, to hold a contest, in which both Campantaṉ and Aruṇaikri would cause their representative deities to appear Despite elaborate fanfare, Campantaṉ failed. When Aruṇakiri sang a stanza of the Tiruppukaḻ Murukaṉ appeared. In some versions of the story, Murukaṉ's appearance was delayed because Campantaṉ had entreated Kalī to hold the child god on her lap She freed him only when Aruṇakiri's singing caused the peacock to dance before her and charm her (cf K V. Karthikeyan, 1972 pp XCV.ff.)

10. Sadhu Anuāṉanda, *op. cit*, p. 10.

11. Ibid., p. 10, The reference could as feasibly refer to conditions in the South shortly after the death of Tēvarāya II in 1446, when during the reign of the weak emperors Mallikārjuṉa, Kapīlesvara, Gajpati, and, eventually, Cālva Kōpptimmā, also known as Tirumalaiteva Mahārājā were among those laying claim to the southern districts of the empire

12 Ibid, p. 10.

13. Ibid ; p. 10,

14 K.V. Karthikeyan, *Kantharanubhuti* P. LXIV. T.A. Gopinath Rao (1918) and C.K. Narayana Iyer also alluded to the Vipaka Patra Mālā, a Sanskrit text purporting to be an account of the poets of a village called Mullaṉṭiram. The text refers to one Sonadrinath also called Aruṇakiri, said to have been born in the year 1299 A D. Gopinatha Rao, however, concluded the text

was unreliable because it was written as late as the seventeenth century.

15. Swami Anuāṉanda, op. cit , p. 10.

16. K V. Karthikeyan, *Kantharanubhuti......* p LXVI

17. K.A Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India* 3rd Edition, (London : Oxford Press, 1966) p 271.

18 Tiruppukaḻ 501 mentions : ...... "munis offering tarpana, uttering Aadityaayā (sic) doing th Gayatri Japa and archana in the early morning after a clean bath, facing the east" as translated by K. V Karthikeyan, *Kantharanubhuti* ... p. LXXVI

19 R Nākacāmi, "Arunakiri Kālam" in *Sri Arunagirinathar Sixth Centenary Volume*, pp 24-26. Nākacāmi suggests the title Pirauteva Rāya might have applied to the contemporary Hoysala king, Virupakṣa, son of Viravallabha but concedes it cannot be proven as yet.

20 Tiruppukaḻ Kāti Māti: *nātā rūpa mānāta rākut tuṟaivōṉē*.

21. T.P. Mīnātcicuntaraṉar, "Arunakirinātar paḻamaiyiṉ putumai" *Sri Arunagirinathar Sixth Centenary Volume* p 2

22. Cf. VII 4 10

23 V. S Ceṅkalvarāya Piḷḷai; Murukavēl Paṉṉiru Tirumurai, Vol II (Madras : Mīṉākṣi Kalyaṇcuntaram, n.d.) p 387,

24 R Nākacāmi in a conversation, 1978

25 I am indebted to S Ramanathan, former principal of the Music College in Madurai for his assistance in interpreting the *Cantam* Prof. Ramanathan suggested the only western counterpart he could think of to Aruṇakiri's style was in the isorhythm of a few fifteenth century English motets,

6. K Seshadri, "Saiva Siddhanta as Religion and Philosophy". *Tamil Culture*, VIII (1959), 174

27 Kamil Zvelebil, "Arunakirinatar—Confessor of Beauty," New Orient IV, No. 5 (October, 1962) 155-56.

28. *Kantaralaṅkāram* 66.

29 *Ibid.* 59.
30. *Ibid*,. 51.
31. *Ibid*, 53
32 *Ibid*, 57.
33 K A Nilakanta Sastri, *The Culture and History o fthe Tamils* (Calcutta : K L Mukhopadhyaya, 1964), p. 137.
34. K A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India* ......, p. 384.
35 J M. Somasundaram Pillai, *Two Thousand Years of Tamil Literature*, (Madras : South India Saiva Siddhanta Publishing Works, Ltd., 1959), p. 348.
36. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, p 378
37. *Ibid*, p. 380.
38 A Sankaranarayanan "Saint Tayumanavar and the spirit of His Age' (Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis submitted to the University of Madras in 1969) p 24
39. *Ibid*, p 54.
40. *Ibid*, p. 54.
41. Robert Bellah, "Meaning and Modernization", in *Beyond Belief*, (N. Y., Harper and Row, 1970), 64 ff
42. This account is based in large measure on an interview with Professor V. A. Devasenapathi, one of the world's foremost exponents of Saiva Siddhānta and a grandson of V T. Subramaṇya Piḷḷai. Supplementing the account is that of Swami Anuāṉanda in *Saint Arunagirinathar* (Madras : Pongi Publications, 1975), pp. 9 ff.
43. Sadhu Parthasarathy, "Life of Srī Vaḷḷimalai Satchidanānthan Swami", *The Indian Express* (November 26, 1970), p 10
44. A number of other persons could be named who were instrumental in the resurgence of interest in Aruṇakiri.For example, T. M. Kriṣṇacāmi Ayyar, commonly known as Tiruppukal̲ Maṇi, should be

mentioned. Krisṇacāmi Ayyar was an advocate, an upper middle class brāhmaṉ, whose devotion to Murukaṉ led him to organize pilgrimages to the temple at Tiruttaṇi, to give Tiruppukal̲ concerts throughout Tamil Nadu and to organize Tiruppukal̲ capā-s (or musical groups) especially around Madras City. One could also name K. V. Jakannataṉ, who has lectured and written extensively on the Murukaṉ tradition, Kalyāṇasuntaram Ayyar, who helped publish material on Tiruppukal̲ Cuvāmi; Swami Anuāṉanda and K. V. Karthikeyan, who have published materials of or about Aruṇakiri in the popular press; to say nothing of hosts of Tamil pandits who regularly lecture on Aruṇakiri's work. However, the present discussion organized around three figures in the Aruṇakiri revival, is intended to be illustrative rather than exhaustive

45. This background information and its interpretation was communicated to me by "Madurai Somu" in an interview in 1972.

The Experience of God

Kantaranupūti

The Experience of God

Kantaranupūti

The Kantaranupūti is, without doubt, the most compact and philosophically suggestive collection of stanzas attributed to Aruṇakiri. As its invocation suggests, it is literally a "garland of poems" in the sense that each stanza is a distinct unit with no apparent relationship, apart from poetic style to other units Each stanza bears its own message yet is strung into a garland by the use of the common *kalippā viruttam* or "square pattern".

The *viruttam* is a pattern of Tamil poetics which is not "metric" - that is, it is not necessarily designed for singing. Musicians must provide their own meter when the Kantaranupūti is sung - most commonly with the *ātitāḷam* or 4-beat meter because that meter "mutilates" the words of the poem the least. The *Kalippā viruttam* is the poetic pattern which has four feet. The Kantaranupūti is much less "rhythmic" and metrically consistent than the Tiruppukal̲ which is intended for singing The Tiruppukal̲ which has the meter or *tāḷām* written into the verse itself follows the *cantam* style wherein the first line of the stanza determines the assonance of each line of that stanza.

Because in the Kantaranupūti the poet has eschewed such stylistic precision some commentators suggest the collection was intended less as poetry than as philosophy; that is, the Kantaranupūti is understood by some with in the Śaiva tradition to be the apex of Aruṇakiri's experience - an "experience" which has transcended stylistic conventions and thought itself The relationship of the Kantaránupūti to the other poetry ascribed to Aruṇakiri is therefore thought to be something like the relationship of *dhayna to dharana; dharana* uses symbolic language to focus on ultimate awareness; *dhyāna* transcends the use of word or symbol and focuses on the awareness itself

Packed into the anthology is a virtually complete, if concise, summation of Śaiva thought This summary is suggested by the title itself since the term *anupūti* or 'spiritual experience" expresses the essence of Śaivism's understanding of the ultimate religious experience. In this religious experience, the soul shares the character of God and is distinct yet inseparable from it, almost as if two elements were to become a new compound. Anupūti is the Tamil term given to that ultimate relationship.

Several commentaries on the Kantaranupūti have been published by devotees within the tradition. Two are particularly worth noting. The collection of Aruṇakiri's work and commentaries by V.S. Ceṅkalvarāya Piḷḷai, in Tamil, are the most extensive in existence: Murukavēl Paṉṉiru Tirumuṟai, Madras: Mīṉākṣi Kalyāṇacuntaram. n d. Volume VI of this series contains V.S. Ceṅkalvarāya Piḷḷai's comments on both the Kantaranupūti and Kantaralaṅkāram. Another commentary by N.V.Karthikeyan, first appeared in *The Divine Life*, the journal of the Divine Life Society, in the issues dating from March, 1969 (Vol. XXXI, No 3) to September 1971 (Vol. XXXIII No. 9) under the title "God-Experience". The commentary was subsequently revised and republished as a book: *Kantaranuputi of Saint Arunagirinathar*, Shivanandanagar: The Divine Life Society, 1972. In addition to these published commentaries. there are a number of oral comments offered on various portions of the *anupūti* by Tamil pandits and teachers virtually daily throughout Tamil Nadu In this respect, I am especially grateful to Mr. A S Gnanasambandan, formerly professor of Tamil at Madurai University, who was most generous with his interpretations of both the *Kantaranupūti* and the *Kantaralaṅkāram*.

Aruṇakiri's Kantaranupūti

Invocation :

That my heart of stone
may melt
and exude Ṣaṇmukan's grace,
that the garland of poetry
strung in praise to Him
may excel,
we pray at the feet
of the five-limbed elephant,
ultimate refuge.

1. O brother of the elephant
who overwhelmed
the cocky *asura*
with elephant face!
Bid me sing eternally
of the dancing peacock
the lance
and beauteous cock.

2.

Joyous, carefree,
you revel in the talk of many yogas,
don't you ?
Teach me to cut through all things
and lose my self,
O Muruka
King of the gods !

3.

Is it sky ? water ? earth ? fire ? air ?
The dawn of wisdom ? the four chanted Vedas?
my self ? my mind ?
Is it the place where I was overcome by grace ?
What is Reality,
O Lord of six faces ?

4.

O Lord of the lance
who pierced the mountain
and the breasts
of Cūra and his hosts,
How could you let me dissipate
surrounded by braceleted women and children ?
How could you ?

5.

Though I pile up prayers

to the six faced One

who puts down Māyā,

Still I'm stuck

in my *māyā*

vacillating amidst

home, dress, and women.

6.

Merciful One

who with undying love

falls at the feet

of Vaḷḷi,

let your lotus feet take root

and blossom in the granite mountain

of my heart.

7.

Stop drifting.

O Mind,

Hear the good news ;

Remember the feet of the lance-bearing God.

Give without reservation ;

Burn into ash

the suffering of self-centeredness ;

Let go of all *karma*.

8.

Kumāra

Son of Himavat's princess

who fought and destroyed *asuras*,

You spoke the eternal truth

that destroys the tendency

to identify

myself with body

dwelling and kin.

9.

O Fearless One,
Quiescent, Unmoving,
Who pierced and split
the impassable mountain
with your lance!
When will I abandon
the instinct
for swinging in the net of lust
for women
with perfumed hair.

10.

You, with garlanded chest,
Who threw the lance
and destroyed
Valāri and Talāri,
enemies of Indra,
and the Cūra tree,
Come, ride your plumed peacock,
and confront
Death
advancing on his black buffalo.

11.

Gem of the Cūras' realm!
Source of the four types of poetry,
Lord of Snake mountain;
You of the lance;
You spoke eternal truth
and stymied death,
stilling the sobbing
of assembled kin,
weeping: "woo! wah!"

12.

Murukaṉ,
birthless, deathless Lord
who abducted the daughter of the deer,
You stole
all other meaning from me
when you said:
"Be still; think not."

13.

Not to know
(despite His grace)
that Murukaṉ of the lance
is the supreme Guru
is not to know
Being
is neither formed nor formless
neither existent nor non-existent
not darkness nor light.

14.

O Mind!
Experience the feet of Murukaṉ
who holds the lance
and really live.
Abandon altogether
the longings of the senses:
the tug of body, mouth, eyes,
nose and ears.

15.

Lord of the five
and of the eight !
Guru of the *deva-s*
extolled by gods and man,
When will you
grant grace
so I may cry out :
"Muruka ! Kumāra ! Guha !"
and
be melted into enlightenment.

16.

Brave one
who threw the lance
and pierced old Cūra ;
Supreme One
who sustains the gods' realm !
Is it good
that I drift
aimlessly
consumed by greed ?

17.

Since the Lord of the Lance
gave us
the knowledge we know
and such wisdom as we have
So He might be served,
You of this world
who would embrace truth and virtue
and be rid of ignorance—
let his name dance on your tongue.

18.

Son of the Sinless One
unseen by Brahmā and Viṣṇu
birthless, deathless,
beyond knowing and forgetting,
You are the greatest of All,
dreaded by demons and
ruler of the realm of gods,
O awesome deliverer.

19.

O King
of the incisive lance
with no beginning nor end !
Poverty, if it appears,
dissipates
comeliness and wealth
character and mind
caste and family.
Woe is me !

20.

O Protector of the realm of snakes !
Warrior great and brave ;
Essence of mantras
said by the gods without ceasing

I marvel
that you saw even in me, your slave,
someone fit
to receive the teaching
of that rare eternal truth.

21.

Muruka
riding the peacock mount !
Great Giver
Who cut in two Cūra's breast!

Set down on me
your two lotus feet
so I can find
the Way
beyond thinking and forgetting.

22.

Chief of Cūra's and *deva-s*
who falls at braided Vaḷḷi's feet;

Blessed am I
when I fall
at your feet
and know
you are Kumāra,
Bull - like Youth,
O Lord of Meru !

23.

Heavenly Lord
of the lightning lance,
who consorts
with the comely Kurava Creeper,
Is it fair
that I be lost
in my ignorance
and not directed
toward your feet?
Is it fair?

24.

Sustainer Lord.
with your bettle lance you
pierced the mountain
and uprooted Cūra;
Can I,
who has fondled
the breasts
of women
with piercing eyes,
ever think of gaining yonr grace?

25.

O Lord
who rides the peacock mount,
all red
are your hands, feet, and lance!

Is it right
that I,
your poor slave,
must wander
and wallow in this karmic world.
believing it to be the truth?

26.

Supreme Gem of the gods' domain
unique wisdom of the Vedas and Āgamas
beyond comprehension,
I am helpless;
yet you
don't think
for a moment
to grant your grace.

27.

O God of the peacock mount!

King! Grace!

True Wealth! Gem!

It seems our fate

to love

this flashy life,

O Golden Lord!

28.

King of the Sharp Lance!

Seat of Wisdom!

Can one say

how sweet it is

to swallow "me" and "mine"

and become

the true self,

O Elixir of Immortality?

29:

You with the shining lance!
though you adorn
your dozen wrestling shoulders
with my words,
You don't tolerate the trifles
of this worthless one;
you've immersed me
in the *māyā* of my home.

30.

O You with the lance
who appeared
in the red of the sky
and made me see
the Incomparable!
How could That be described
to anyone else
unless he sense it
the same way?

31.

Long live the,
Lord of the peacock mount!
What lowly deeds have I done
that you should
damn me to suffer
in the miserable *māyā*
of this rotting life?

32.

O triumphant One
who shattered the mountain!
O Mountain
who embraced
the damsel
of that savage hunters' tribe!.
How long must I endure
the headache, agony,
and restless sighs
which come with learning ?

33.

Gracious Lord!
Gaṅga's Son!
Gift - giver!
When can I leave
the bewitching forest
of wealth, house
and mental anguish?
Skanda! O Murukaṉ!

34.

Giver of grace;
Child of river Gaṅga!
Lord of the warrior peacock;

Grant grace,
so I'm not burned up
on the flaming path
toward sumptuous women,

O Lord of six faces!

35.

Chief of the *Cūra*-s
who worships none
but Vaḷḷi
with crescent forehead!
When will you grant grace
So I,
the *karma*-caught,
who cannot leave this doomed body
may attain
immortality
at your feet.

36.

O You, whose feet
are the flowers worn
by all the gods since Brahmā,
who falls at the feet
of the Kurava girl;
What was the truth
you taught Śivaṉ
when he urged you :
"Lord Kumāra, preach to me."?

37.

O Mind ;
with intelligence
patiently root out ego;
yearn to reach
a place
in the fellowship
of the god
whose powerful lance
pierced the mountain.

38.

King of the lance
praised by demon hordes;
Lord of huntress
bedecked with *kūtāḷa* blooms;
How can I,
who persists
in evil and idle boasting,
comprehend the grace
that accepts even me?

39

O King!
Guru of Śiva;
Lord who hugged
the huntress' hips;
When will I let go
the three lusts,
māyā,
and the seven births?

40.

O You, who roamed
through fields of green grass
into hunters' huts
beside springs
and under cascades!

Should I,
who'll not forget
the glittering lance
which dispels *karma*
bog down
in my house
and be confused?

41.

Save me, save me,
Muruka,
on your peacock mount,
Yogin, who preached wisdom
to Śiva!
When Death comes
to threaten me,
Come, save me
immortal
at your feet.

42.

You with the unique lance!
when you taught me
to worship you
with wisdom,
not knowledge,
I cut off
the world:
ignorance, learning,
mind and speech.

43.

Murukaṉ,
beloved of her who wears
purity's dress and jewels!
After the chains
of my lust
were shattered
by your grace,
that Silent Bliss
came.

44.

Muruka
of the unique destructive lance!
How can I grasp the grace
which ensures my surrender
at your feet,
fragrant with millet fields,
wondrous woods,
crowns of prone *deva*-s,
the Vedas
and *mokṣa*?

45

Gracious Lord
who grants Śivayoga to all!
Primordial youth,
guru riding the elephant
armed with thunderbolt!
Will you impart the truth
so I need not beg
at the doors of those
who are learned
but do not share it?

46.

Uma's Son!
Kumāra!
Lord of the Vedas!
You, Mother and Father to me,
End my mind's anxiety
and grant me grace,
O Skanda!
Lord of the Shining Lance!

47.

You took the devas' side
and made their realm fit
when you smashed the advancing *Cūraṉ*;
Is it possibie
that I, your poor slave,
could attain
that state
beyond
the thirty - six?

48.

You are one with those
who've vanquished stupidity
dispelled ignorance
and cut off worldliness,
O Lord of the lance!

Are you not the god
who is inseparable
from the wisdom
of those who
have risen above knowledge
to attain ultimate awareness?

49

Lord with incisive lance;
You who dispels the misery
of those who think on you;
Light from whom mercy radiates;
Can one understand
with mere words
the nature of
THAT
which stands in solitary grandeur?

50.

Son of the River!
Seat of Wisdom;
Hero who vanquished Titi's sons!
Must I waste away in this world
losing my mind
shriveled of spirit
benumbed
and wholly cut off from salvation?

51.

Formed, Formless;

Being, Non-Being;

Flower, Fragrance;

Jewel, Radiance;

Embryo, Life;

Goal and Way;

Come, Guha, Guru;

Grant your Grace.

GOD'S ORNAMENT

KANTARALAṄKĀRAM

GOD'S ORNAMENT

KANTARALAṄKĀRAM

The Kantaralaṅkāram is, literally, a "garland" or "ornament" of praise. It is not as measured as the Kantaranupūti, which was probably written later. However, this anthology is more florid in image and style than the latter, more given to the use of sensual images. Each stanza stands independently, its four lines usually rhyming in the first two syllables. The *viruttam* or "beat" of the Kantaralaṅkāram generally consists of six feet in a line, with each foot containing a long and two short beats. (luu luu luu luu luu luu).

To my knowledge, the *Kantaralaṅkāram* has been rendered in English on only one other occasion - that a paraphrase by Prof. V. A Devasenapathi, (*The Kantaralaṅkāram.* Mass Media and Publications Private Limited, Madras 32; 1976) I am most grateful to Prof Devasenapathi for his assistance in the preparation of this volume

KANTARALAṄKĀRAM

Invocation :

I visited the sacred gopuram
at the elegant Northern entrance
to impregnable Tiruvaṇṇāmalai
And saw my valiant Lord,
younger brother to Vināyakar,
the rutting elephant,
enjoying the sugar
offered
with the rapping of *bhaktas'* knuckles,
"*taṭapaṭa*" on the brow.

1.

Lord of grace!
Son of Siva,
who wears in his forest of red unkempt hair
the river, snake, golden *koṉṟai*, white blossom,
and crescent moon,
You revealed the path
transcending the world's muck
to me —
who is without
even a trace of saving merit!

2.

If you do not learn now,
without mistake,
from a heart of love,
the poems of the Lancer
who cuts off *karma* and rebirth,

will you learn
on that day
when fearsome Death,
eyes flashing and smoking like a fire,
tightens the noose around your neck?

3.

O lance in the red hand of the son
of Him,
riding the splendid chariot,
who burned the three cities!
You smashed Mt Krauñca
sent flying the encircling army of *asura-s*
scattered the whole host of *Cūraṉ*
and set free the *devas*' realm.

4

O you, who,
in the wink of an eye,
killed with your sharp scimitar
the black deceitful *Cūraṉ*,
spilling his blood
and saving the *deva-s*!

My five senses
divert me
from reaching you,
focussing on you
meditating upon your feet,
or strewing flowers for you.
What can I do now?

5

The world knows as chief of the *kuṟiñci*
the baby who sucks
the breast of that fair goddess
who gave birth to the world
that it may be perfected,
He cries as he climbs into his lotus cradle
and craves the six damsels'
breasts;

but even as he weeps
so the sea,
mountains
and demons
also weep

6.

Once I tasted the sweetness of that One Supernal Bliss
which grew from true love's
constant contemplation
on Kumāraṉ
who caressed the breast
of the innocent girl
who watched over the millet
in the great green fields ;

from that day on
even sugar cane seemed sour
and rich honey wretchedly bitter.

7

O Lord of the lance
who made the demons dance proudly
in the battlefield
and to dive and revel, bathe and drink
in the pool of blood
spurting from the chests of *asuras !*

Drive out
the illusions from my mind
that wallows in foolish deeds
and is mired in malice !

8.

Six-faced preacher !
what a marvel
that you have come
to clearly tell us
of the unique Emptiness
of primordial space
and the blissful honey
nectared from grace
on the mountain
radiant with wisdom

9

Is it possible to tell
of that truth
which is not sky, nor wind, nor fire
nor water, nor earth
which is neither it nor I
neither formed nor formless ;
the truth
preached to me that day
by the Lord of Vaḷḷi
whose voice
is far sweeter than
honey or syrup ?

10.

O valorous Lord
whose mountainous shoulders
embraced the virtuous Vaḷḷi,
whose lips, red as *Kovvai* fruit
issued words sweet as the *kolli rākam* ;

O Vēlaṉ
you steered me to the very verge
of quiescence
where one is lost to all
beyond all speech !

11.

The rustling of the feathered tuft
of the peacock,
darting, swift as a whipped steed,
on which the triumphant Vēlaṉ rides,
lance secure,
to the dread of the *asura-s*,

scatters the dust of Mt. Meru
in all eight directions,
sanding the seas.

12.

The flapping wings of the cock
on the banner of Vēlaṉ,
destroyer of enemy hosts,
Churned the oceans
shattered the firmament
made the stars to fall
and flattened
Mt. Meru and the hills.

13

At the tinkling of the *kiṅkiṇi* bell
girdling the son of the androgynous one
asura-s were startled
eight directions were deafened
eight mountains and Meru were shaken
and the fear of *deva-s* vanquished.

14

O Ṣaṇmukam,
whose twelve hands clapped
and cut in two the eight mountains,
shook Meru
and saved the *deva-s*,

deliver me,
of adhesive mind,
from rampant senses
which lead to a life
of degenerate attachment.

15

Isn't it true
that the feet
of that nephew
of Him
who, asking Māvali for three steps,
stretched his red foot
atop the cosmos

transform
the peacock, his travelling mount,
the heads of *deva-s*
and the manuscripts of my songs?

16.

Dlvert your mind from drifting ;
abandon anger ;
give liberally ;
remain content ;
so that the grace of the Lord
who threw the sharp lance
through savage Cūraṉ's breast
and saved the seven worlds
be granted you
without your asking.

17.

O mind,
won't you go and hide,
quiescent,
at the lotus feet—
decked with anklets of *veṭci* blossoms –
the feet of the Lord
praised by Vedas and Āgamas,
where there is neither enlightenment
nor ignorance
and hypocrisy is absent ?

18

Lauding the Lord
of the sharp shining lance,
share with the poor
at least a particle of rice,
knowing that wealth helps you
make your eternal journey
no more than your shadow
shelters you from the heat of he sunt.

19.

O king
with sharp
Krauñca-piercing lance,
your breast garlanded with *Kaṭampu* blossoms,

when I begin
to contemplate you
and attain silence,
I subjugate the *guṇas*
forget the self
and become oblivious of the body.

20.

Foolish folks
who think you can live in this world
without surrendering
at the feet
of Him
whose banner is the cock!

Relentless Fate,
the fruit of your *karma*,
does not let you enjoy your weelth;
If you bury it deep within the earth
will it follow you when you are gone?

21.

O Embodiment of wisdom and grace!
Sun of - *Deva*-s
Savior of Indrani's *tāli* !
Save all who surrender.
Lord, whose feet are circled
with *kiṇkiṇi* bells,
who possesses lance
and dancing peacock
with radiating tail,
because of your uplift
we do not fear death,

22.

He born of Umā
Son in law of the Bowman
who decapitated
the twenty - armed one ;
He who loved Vaḷḷi
of the flowered hair
bestows long life
even on those who insult him
by misusing the three arts.

23.

O Light glowing
on sacred mount Ceṅkoṭṭai
God with pointed lance,
I will not forget you.
Come and save me
before this frame
with two legs and arms
housing my five senses
degenerates.

24.

The secret
published aloud even to me,
your worried slave,
when you appeared in the hills
and tried to wed
the *kuṟiñci* damsel
who played,
accompanied
by bugle and flute·
that secret
enabled me to merge
with
primordial Space.

25

Hey, blind death!
Come, at arm's length!
and see what happens!
Did you see the
glittering
guileless
sword of wisdom
that destroys the awareness
of I, mine and you
held
by this slave of Vēlavaṉ,
Lord of Centil?
It can attack and cut you,
make you suffer,
and knock down your club and hook.

26

Śivayogins who contemplate
and comprehend
the teachings of the Guru
who comes on his peacock
followed by the *Kuṟava* girl.
They alone will overcome,
while mere ritualists
succumb to death.

27.

Lord Skanda
The girdle about his waist
its attached sword
the garland of red *vețci*
on his shoulders
his cock banner
peacock
and lance -

all stand before me
day and night
to dispel the fear of Death
and disperse its messengers.

28.

Apart from craving
to fall down and worship
at the red feet of the Lord
lance shining in hand,
and seeing him here,
how otherwise does one describe
the Supreme
who, though eternal and changeless,
is formed, formless
and beyond the grasp
of word
deed
and mind ?

29

By the grace of the Lord of Vaḷḷi
I rafted,
on the strength
of an unperturbed mind
across the tempestuous sea of passion
for ornamented women
and for their
lush red lips
neck
shoulders
breasts
navel
and
pubis
poised, hooded
like a ser-
pent,

30.

O mind
you wander over
beautiful women
with milk-like voiees
cotton feet
and eyes that dart like *cēl* fish;
you speak not of the lance
in the sacrad hand
of the lord of *Centil*
nor of the invincible peacock
nor of the feet
ankleted and decked
with *veṭci* flowers.
How could you attain immortality?

31.

Vēl - Lord
whose shiny Lance
pierced Krauñca peak
evaporated the seas
felled the *Cūra*-tree
and shed his blood,
grant me the liberation at your feet
ruddier than the lotus
that I not be born again
into a mortal body.

32

O Skanda
with the lance
that pierced the mountain
and the breast of Cūraṉ
advancing with his host
when will you come
and save me
from the anguish
of craving for those women
with eyes like nets
that cause torment
and entrap
even the minds
of Sanyasins?

33.

Those who recite
the sacred name
of the Lord
with victorious lance
who shattered into bits
the entire race of *asura-s*
and is gracious to his devotees
will not plunge
into the ocean
of endless births
nor worry
about the poverty
in this world
which destroys all.

34.

O Skanda
who attacked and pierced the mountain!

My mind is caught
in the net
spread by those
whose eyes are sharp as lances
and who swallow up the lives of men
while satiating their lust for flesh
Bless me, who's gone astray,
with that wisdom
which, up to now,
has eluded me.

35

O Victorious King
who rescued the *deva*-s' realm
by puncturing the
malicious *Cūra*'s brow
so that his hot blood
bubbled out.
Alas! when can I tread that ghat of *bhakti*
into the ocean of bliss
so that the waves of my intellect
are indistinguishable from it?

36

O mind
in which the love of wealth
crests and eddies like a flooded river,
you never think of the lord of Ceṅkōṭu
on the flowing Kāvēri
depositing the jewellery
cast from elephant's tusks,
nor of the lance
tearing through
the eight mountains.
When are you going to
rise above
sorrow and pleasure?
How are you going to
attain *mokṣa*?

37.

Warrior!
who killed the ferocious Cūraṉ
and made the horde
of death's demons
dance and dum the drums:
"dum dum du du du du dum",
though I become drunk
on the toddy of intercourse
with tender sweet-tounged things,
yet, I shall not forget the lance.

38.

Lord Kumāra,
your feet
ringed with various anklets —
cilampu, *cataṅkai*, and *taṇṭai*
your six faces
shoulders
and *kaṭampu* garlands
come and appear before me,
what could an inauspicious day do —
or *Karma*
or asterisms directed against me
or even death itself?

39

O Son-in-law of the One
who churned the sea
by spinning
the mountain
like a top
roped to the lord of snakes,
will there be a day
when you will
bestow grace on me,
and end the suffering
of death and rebirth,
that I may become one with you?

40

As fields and gardens
of Centūr
were destroyed by *cēl* fish,
the lust for women
was removed
by love
for the honey
of *Kaṭampu.*
As Sea, Cūraṉ, and mountain
were overcome
by the lance
of the peacock-mounted one,
the signature of Brahmā
on my brow
was blotted out
by His feet.

41.

O red Lord of the lance,
nephew of Mālōṉ
who sleeps upon the many-hooded
but legless snake
which feeds on air alone,

I do not know
the way out
from constant lust
from the pleasures of
mild voiced women.
Let your feet blossom and lead me out!

42

How did I happen
to get this head
which does not bow
before the lotus feet
of *Kumāraṉ* who
melts with desire
for the hood-like pubis
of his Kuṟava sweetheart.

Guru,
you granted me
the resolve
to leave
this hovel of flesh
and attain *mokṣa* !

43

How did I happen
to get these hands
which do not fold
in loving praise
of Murukaṉ
whose battle lance
felled the *asura*·*s*
and caused their realms
to echo with the sound,
for He is the son of Śiva
garlanded with many-hooded snakes
that have ears for eyes
and the nephew of Him
who built a bridge
across the ocean
with monkeys' help.

44.

When this shack of flesh,
standing on two legs
with curved back and hagning hands,
tied up with nerves
walled with skin
and sustained by the ten winds
departs,

44 (cont.)

there is no refuge
but the feet
of the Lord
who pierced the mountain
with His lance.

45

O Lord of the lance,
Victor over fearsome Cūraṉ's tribe
Teacher of the destroyer of three cities
who skinned the twin-tusked trunked beast
and clad his shoulders in its hide,
You preached:
"Do not live in the house of five elements,
Be without speech and feeling
in that unique Space
unknown
to any mortal".

46.

O Lord of the Lance!
Child Skanda!
Lord of Centil!
Grant the grace
of that wisdom
enabling me to merge with you
and delivering me
of the anguish
that comes of
my insatiable lust
for the pubis.

47.

Once all action stopped
and I became quiescent
at the lotus of intellect
dissolved in the ocean of bliss,
whose [waves wash all shores,

I found *amṛta*,
eternally sweet,
in your six faces
and twelve shoulders.

48.

O Son of Ganga
who pierced and shattered
the mountain
with your shiny lance,
what will you do with me,
karma - caught,
unable to aim my intellect
and direct it with love
toward your lotus feet
where liberation waits?

Would you throw your lance
to scare
the ancient Cūra?

49.

O Cluttered Mind
unaware
that the wealth
of those who ride in chariots
or mount on horse
or elephant
is but a bubble

49. (cont,)

there is no way to Realization
unless you join the
bhakta-s
of the Lord
who threw his shining lance
into Cūraṉ
and the mountain.

50.

O Rider of that feathered peacock
who made Cūraṉ tremble
and shattered Krauñca!
Nephew of the Lord
who danced upon the snake!
I shall cherish the widely read Tiruppukaḻ
when Death comes to me
with its noose.
Come, Bid me:
"Fear not".

51

O People of the world !

Worship the One.

who sent the lance

through the mountain

and shattered it into six parts,

and, in steadfast love,

perform penance.

Share food-

be it raw or cooked-

with those who come to you in need

and that will be your food and support

on the unending path

after death.

52.

Lord of the peacock

which destroys hooded snakes

with bodies like rope!

Kumāra, Lord

who lives in a cave

and avenges *asura-s!*

Courageous and gracious One !

Grant me the desire to sing

with classical Tamil song

about the cock

and the lance

which pierced

Mt. Krauñca

53.

Those who do not sing
out of true love
for Murukaṉ
who yearns for
the breasts of the huntress
who do not share
their wealth
while they have it
but amass and bury it ;
they waste their life-time
worrying
and are shocked
when it is stolen
and pine sorrowfully
for more.

54.

O You
nephew of Him
who asked the sea to show the way
to Ceylon
but
set fire to it on its silence!
Lord on the peacock mount,
you did not destine me
to give the needy
what they need
but to be born and die
again and again.

55

Those not rid of self-orientation
who do not subdue
the five senses
who will not let go
of consciousness
and
forgetfullness
who spend not a moment
seeing Murukaṉ
in the inner light of *Ōm*
and cannot be at peace—
what will they do
when the messengers of Death
visit them?

56.

All of you!
Melt
when you hear hymns
sung to Him
who shattered
the massive mountain.
Disdain
silly songs;

56. (cont.)

Warn those
who have not remembered
hell's burning pit
and the agony
of the long thirsty path
which leads to Death.

Warn them!

57.

O mind
when we die,
this body will be
a mere handful of ash.

Pray to the Lord of Vaḷḷi
born of a deer
in the forest
where male and female elephants
sport together.

Get two handfuls of rice;
give to the needy;
and then
eat and live.

58

The Lord
dear to the immature breasts
of the sky-blue Vaḷḷi
watching the unripe millet

and beloved of Śiva
who, with his third eye,
burned to ash
warring Kāma
with his sugar cane bow
jasmine arrows,
and quiver

He is the favorite
in the realm of the devas.

59.

That which you give
to those who beg
will return to you
at some point
like the grace of Him
who threw his lance
into the raging sea

But, do you think
the beautiful
mansions, gold, and women
which you horde
without sharing a thing
will go with you on that
lonely final journey?

60.

I have sung not a word
in praise
of the peacock-mounted Lord;
Nor have I melted in worship of Him,
Nor meditated at his ankleted feet,
nor gone to see him;
Nor have I eschewed falsehood
and embraced truth
that I might abandon
the anguish
of mind and body.

61.

Lord of the faultless lance
who pierced the mountain
beheaded *asura-s*
and caused the sea to dry!
You taught me
of that state
which transcends the five elements
words and sense
body and life
means and end
I and mine.

62.

The ornament of him
who sits under the banyan tree
is the garland of skulls;
that of Mālōṉ
who swallows the world
is the necklace of *tuḷaci* leaves;
the ornaments
for the feet of the Lord
of the peacock
are the crowns of *deva-s*
and the *Kaṭampu* flower;
and for the lance in his hand
are the sea, the Cūr, and Mount Mēru.

63.

How did I get
the wisdom
that comes only
from weeping
worship
and melting of heart?
When my love
for the Lord of the battle lance
who taught
His truth
to the god
whose half is green.
When my love
is tested, will it be found false?

64.

O Death
who comes on the buffalo,

I will not let you go
without cutting you to shreds
while the whole world watches

I stand in the presence
of the Red Lord
who fought the ferocious Cūraṉ

Depart from me
with all your host ;
the sword of Śakti
is in my hand.

65.

O Lord on the peacock
which spreads its tail
across the sky,
drives away the elephants
of the eight directions,
and moves the eight mountains!

When Death comes
on his black buffalo
and binds me
with his rope,
come and set me free.

66.

Those who say
the body is but a water-bubble
and wealth is as transient as a flash,
yet
rise and hide
when accosted by hungry beggars
are people who have no love
for Kumāra of the lance
Their "wisdom" is useless !

67.

O Warrior
with twelve mountainous shoulders
braceletted
and embraced by sweet damsel
of the fearless, fighting
elephant,
restive and rutting !

Though I've been born human,
the noblest of births,
yet I've not learned
to surrender
at your feet
and obtain liberation.

68

Those who control restive minds
and concentrate
at the feet of Murukaṉ
with His incomparable battle lance

will find
as they lose consciousness
of time and space
that Paśupati dances
to the accompaniment of singing Pārvati

As he dances,
their bliss
transcends
comprehension.

69

After Kantaswami
who once revealed that unique wisdom
to his father
uplifted me
by his teaching,

what could Death do to me?
If he advances upon me
with anger and his trident,
I shall cut him down
with the sword of wisdom.

70.

That my eyes may see
what is worthwhile
they look at the Lord's tender
flower feet ;
That my mouth may speak words
that are truth alone
it utters the names of Murukaṉ ;
That my earlier *Karma* be overruled
I rely on his twelve shoulders ;
lest my final trek
be lonely and dreadful
the lance and peacock
of Ceṅkōṭṭai's Lord
accompany me.

71.

You Yogins !
what use is it
to ingest air
as from a bellows
and feed on that ?
If you keep in mind
the seedling of wisdom
known as Śivayoga
preached by the
six-faced Lord
then liberation is within reach.

72

No misfortune will befall
those who do not forget
until their death
Skanda, the lord of Tiruccenkōṭu
who holds the glittering red lance,
Source of Tamil literature,
Lord on the peacock
girt in fragrant
kaṭampu garlands
and beloved of Vaḷḷi.

73

Some thing
which has no going nor coming
day nor night
in nor out
word, form, nor end
comes again and again
to me
overwhelms my mind
and envelops me.
the bliss it brings is inexpressible,
O Lord of six faces!

74.

If you want to remain
in that Space
where there is no day nor night,
you need the grace
of the Child of him
with snakes in his hair.
Worship at the bejewelled feet
wearing flowered anklets
in freed love.
Control your wandering senses
and volatile emotions;
else, the way is not easy.

75

O mind
you don't recite
Paḻani's sacred name;
you don't fall at the feet
of those who do;
you don't utter the name Muruka;
you don't emrbace poverty
by irretrievably giving to the poor;
you don't dance ecstatically
to attain spiritual bliss
Where can you and I
find refuge,
hereafter?

76.

O Kumāra,
Lord of the South's Taṉikai hills
who shattered Mt. Krauñca.
what wrong have I done the Creator
that he should
give me this head
which does not wear your ankleted feet,
these eyes
which do not look upon you
these hands
which do not fold in worship of you,
and this tongue
which does not praise you?

77.

O Mind
stop yearning
to fondle the breasts
of beautiful women
with darting eyes
with whom you are infatuated.

Look rather
at the feet
of Him who once threw his lance
that Indrānī
wife of Indra
who owns the white elephant
standing like a rock
should not be widowed.

You fools
who brag
of your worldly achievements
but praise not the Lord
of the incisive lance,

when Death comes,
will you take along
the ornaments
garlanded women
mansions
and money-bags?

Too Bad!
You're bound to perish!
What can I say of your foolishness?

79

O Muruka
with the lance that deviates not!
Skanda
who resides on Tiruttaṇi hill
blossomed with *kaṭampu!*

Save me from the anguish
of my entrapment
by the eyes of women
who play games,
O Kumāra,
Savior of Amarāvati!

80

O Child of Umā
at whose side,
sits the Mountain of sacrifice
in whom is pure eternal liberation,
who is the three-eyed destroyer
of three cities,

when Death comes
riding high in the skies,
come, stand before me
on your peacock mount.

81.

O Lord of Death
Do not come near!
If you do,
I shall take your life!
In my mind
is the lance
the knife
and the sword
of the Child
who, not satisfied with milk
of the six women
who became stars,
was suckled by Umā herself.

82.

O Warrior!
you frightened
the terrible Cūraṉ
who outgrew the universe
of Brahmā,
seated on a lotus,
and fought like a rogue elephant
in Indra's realm.

Bid my mind
surrender
by the red *kaṭampu*
at your feet!

83

When the Lord
who wore *kaḻal* anklets
on his small feet
rode his peacock like a steed
to release the *deva-s*
and their troubled realm,
the army of Cūraṉ was broken.
When he cast
his incomparable lance,
all eight mountains
crumbled.

84.

Apart from
this feeble attempt
to praise you :
"O Skanda,
Son of Śiva
with blue spot
on his neck",

I know of nothing else.
When I forget all I've learned
and die
and make my relatives
and home town
weep,
when the five senses
all leave my body,
only you will be
my refuge.

85.

O Yogins
who try to focus your eyes
on your nose
and to send your inner breath
from the navel
to the base of your skull
without letting it out
at any point,

85. (cont.)

It is very easy
to attain liberation
if you concentrate
upon the feet
of the Lord
of the Kuṟava girl
living in a forest.

86.

Even if I antagonize Death
and his weaponry,
could anything befall?

For I have as my armor
the grace
of the Lancer Lord,
Son of the god with trident
beyond comprehending
by Him
who holds conch and wheel
and Him
who is lotus-born.

Lord Skanda has
as his banner
the cock
with glittering red head
and fighting foot.

87.

What can the final message
sent by Death
do
to the great wise saints
who live
allied
to Amarāvati's six-faced Lord?

To Him
the host of *deva-s* cry:
"O Kumāra, at your feet
we surrender;
we surrender!"

88.

O You,
devoid of evil,
by whose gripping of the lance
crows and vultures
scrap for food
demons dance on the battleground
and *asura-s* spit flesh from their mouths,

save me,
a sinner,
spoiled
by my association
with men
who know not
how to worship you.

89.

How dare
Brahmā
write about me
in his book of fate!
Has he forgotten
the time
his legs
were chained?
If my Lord
who comes
with his unique lance
and makes the turbulent sea
and golden Krauñca
cry out—
if he hears of this,
not only Brahmā's legs
but his hands
will be chained.

90.

What a pity,
O Brahmā,
you didn't give me
four thousand eyes
to go see
and worship
the Lord of Ceṅkōṭu
where fields and gardens are filled
with *cēl* fish—

the Lord
who is nephew to Mālōṉ
and son of Him
who dances in open spaces,
God above gods,
God of true wisdom.

91.

O Lord of Ceṅkōṭu
where mango and tender nut trees
abound;
Lord of the hunt
with cock-banner in hand,
who routed
the hostile mango tree-Cūraṉ;
Noble Nephew
of black Tirumāl
who stole
Vaḷḷi,
fair child
of the red deer;
How good it is to praise you!

92.

O Protector
who gripped your lance
that *deva*-s
would not run away
and be lost
when they saw terrible Cūraṉ
advancing
armed with anger and club
after conquering this world
and the other!

Offer me
your ankleted lotus feet
which stores
the pure nectar of wisdom
partaken in bliss
by your devotees.

93.

The sound of the conch
of Tirumāl
whose belly smells of earth
was heard
only in the fragrant gardens
and ponds of heaven.

93. (cont)

But, the sound
of the *kiṅkiṇi* bell
ankleting
the child
who shattered a mountain
with his lance
in play

was heard
in all the fourteen worlds.

94.

O Heart
that lusts
for those sleek darting eyes
like *keṇṭai* fish
jumping through creepers

and for lips
lush as *kovvai* fruit
that cloak hypocritical words
and smiling pearl white teeth,

you do not crave
for the feet
of Him who loved
cute little Vaḷḷi,
parrot of the millet fields

95.

To attain
that great Emptiness
where there is none to witness
by following
the teaching of Murukaṉ
lord of grace
nephew of Tirumāl
who bored into the earth
as a boar

one must realize
the distinction
between
him and me

96.

O peacock
of the great victorious Lord!
If only you were left alone
to remove
the world's sufferings,

you would roam about
with your feathers fanned out
beyond the Northern mountain
seas and sun
golden *cakravāḷa* mountains
and all the directions.

97.

The richly feathered peacock
of the Lord of Ceṅkōṭu
with fields aglow with *cēl* fish
noisily attacks
the hood of the cosmic snake

until,
trembling,
it lies at the peacock's feet
along with its heap of red jewels
and Tirumāl
who protects the world
and his conch and wheel.

98:

My mind
in anguish here
blames Fate
for letting me suffer
and shoulder the burden
of this body
stuffed with nerves
and letting me love
this life of *māyā*
so like a wadi,

O Skanda
Murukaṉ of the lance!
I see no way to attain liberation!

99.

O Lord
mounted on the nobly feathered peacock!
My lonely errant mind
languishes,
wavering and withering
like a solitary creeper
spreading
without support.

won't you save me
by merging me
with your red lotus feet?

100.

O Lord with the lance
which shattered Mt. Krauñca
with love
you included
ignorant me,
who doesn't even think
to share
in the company
of stalwart devotees.
You have put an end to birth
and enabled me
to escape
this prison
and break
the bonds of *Karma*'s desires.

The rest of the stanzas are probably later interpolations:

101.

Those who learn
even one song
from the hundred
in the Kantaralaṅkāram
need not fear wealthy kings
nor the fight with Death;
they need not go near
the fires of hell.
nor contract severe diseases;
nor need they fear the tiger,
the bear, nor the elephant.

102

The sacred feet
decked in *toṇṭái* and anklet,
the incisive lance
that pierced the mountain,
the *kaṭampu* tree,
the twelve broad shoulders,
the six fragrant faces
exuding wisdom.
the eyes like blossoms—
All appeared before me.
as a teacher
and made my mind peaceful.

103.

O fearsome destroyer
of *asura-s!*
O Valiant Vēlaṉ
esteemed
even by Tirumāl
whom Gajendiran praises
because that god
killed the crocodile
and heard the elephant's cry;
bestow your ankleted feet
to show me
the place
where there is neither
night nor day.

104.

Whenever I think of Him
the Lord of Ceṅkōṭu
where lotus exudes
pearls of fragrance
who has the red, fearsome, sharp lance
six faces
and twelve shoulders in a row,
He comes and stands
before me
on that spot.

105

O Head of *deva*-s!
Lord with cock banner
living on Tiruttaṇi hill
set midst green fields
and ponds.

I don't think
of worshipping
at your gracious feet
even when I know
my life's at stake.
Save me!

106.

O jewel
mounted on the peacock!
Lord who came
as Vaḷḷi's husband
who lives at Tiruccentūr
where pearls
in thousands
wash up on the shores

My mind suffers
like an ant
struggling
upon a fire brand
burning on both ends.

107

Never need I fear
Death
who advances
with trident
and noose

since I have true help
in the sacred hands and lance
of the six-faced Lord,
Son of Śiva
who drank the poison
arising from the sea.

Notes - Kantaranūputi

Invocation :

As with all Hindu devotional poetry, the first stanza is an invocation to Ganeśa, the elephant - headed god, who assures the success of all such enterprises.

Each line starts with the first two syllables, rhyming : *neñcam* = the "heart" is the seat of emotions, the core of one's existence (cf. *nephesh* or *psyché*) ; it is depicted here with a "soft" phoneme, *ñc* ; on the other hand, the heart's unregenerated state is depicted with the harsh term *Kaṉakal* (stone - like) ; *ceñcoṟ* - extra - ordinary words, *i. e* , poetry. *pañcakkaruvāṉai* - five - limbed elephant. Śaiva commentators suggest something of the elephant's rich symbolism is implied here . the number five *(pañca)* is a number bearing cosmic overtones in Vedic and Śaiva imagery (*e g* , four directions plus center ; five elements, five heads of Śiva, etc.) ; further, the elephant's profile is said to be a reminder of the sacred syllable *ōm* ;

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Hence, the elephant - head associated with Ganesa,and also associated with Murukaṉ as brother and mount, represents totality

Stanza 1 :

This stanza introduces three symbols commonly associated with Murukaṉ : the peacock (*mayil*), his most common mount in early Tamil poetry suggests the festivity and color of the earth and the chthonic character of the god of the hills In time, the peacock assumes celestial attributes, like the *garuḍa* ; and militant attributes, destroying the primordial

serpent; it is the blue-green ocean straddled by the god, red as the rising sun. Its fanned out tail is said to be the circle of totality. Indeed, the peacock is the cosmos itself. The rooster (*cēval*) is linked to the god in part because of his solar attributes and his "watchbird" status The lance (*vēl*), Murukan's weapon, depicted the god's hunting and warrior stages in earlier years. Eventually, it came to represent the god's power over the malevolent forces of the world and the self. The lance, therefore, is the instrument of saving discrimination. It represents power and wisdom; its touch dispels chaos and evil, affords creation and enlightenment.

Ṡaiva commentators commonly speak of a particular meaning ascribed to the iconographic arrangement of the peacock, rooster, and lance. The peacock, with its variegated colors, at the foot of the god is said to represent *viṇṭu*—the phenomenal world—the world with its variety, earthiness and sensuosness. The rooster, with its numinous crowing, inscribed on the banner above the god's shoulder, is said to represent *nāta*, primordial sound (*vāc*), the numinous realm The lance, leaning diagonally from peacock toward rooster, is said to be the integrating principle, penetrating both extremes.

The elephant's ambivalence is recognized here. Aside from its benevolent features, the elephant also is one of the faces of evil. Malevolence, chacs, primordiality are all suggested in the untamed beast before it becomes the god's mount.

Stanza 2 :

Two phrases suggest the nature of the "joy" which characterizes God and the experience of God: *ullāca nirākulo* might be literally translated "Without the mental anguish and physical stress that sensuous happiness brings". The poet knows something of the ambivalence and waste that characterizes sensuous pleasures. This is not the joy that is Murukan's. Rather the god knows *callāpa vinōtan*-profound pleasure, joy that surpasses description, peace that defies comprehension.

Stanza 3 :

Do the questions connote uncertainty and doubt? Or do they convey the certitude that Reality or "the ultimate" is beyond all the particulars yet intimated by all particulars? Commentators are unanimous in affirming that it is the latter. The rhythm of the stanza in the original seems to support the latter. The stanza is generally balanced, symmetrical, patterned, and regular. For example, the vowels in the first two lines share the same assonance : long, long, short short long, short, short, long It is as if the rhythm itself bespeak, security and certainty more than doubt

Stanza 4 :

This stanza is organized around the four alliterative phrases starting each line The second line of the Tamil describes the state of the poet : *Taḷaipaṭṭa aḻiya* - lost, adrift enchained ; fallen from grace, regressed; the first line refers to the women by whom the poet is "encircled": *Vaḷaipaṭṭa*-braceleted; each of these two words alludes to "encirclement", The last two lines refer to a mythic exploit of the god : *Toḷaipaṭṭ uruva*, is a reference, used twice, to piercing, puncturing, making a hole in the mountain and in the breast of the *asura* which "raised" an entourage (*Kiḷaipaṭṭa eḻu*). Some Śaiva commentators (cf A.S. Gnanasambandan) speculate that the double referenee to the lance's puncturing is intended to suggest the lance's penetrating of the two extremes, *nāta* and *vintu* The argument used is that *cūra* (demon) refers to an abstract realm (*nāta*), while *Kiri* (mountain) refers to a concrete realm (*vlntu*).

Stanza 6 :

Vaḷḷi is the popular consort of Murukaṉ in Tamil literature In the Epic myths Devasenā is the bride of Skanda, given to him upon his victory in battle. In early

Tamil Caṅkam literature, Vaḷḷi is the creeper which entwines about the *vēṅkai* tree, a combination used as metaphor of lovers, and eventually of the relationship between god and man. By the sixth century both Vaḷḷi and Devasenā are known as Murukaṉ's consorts in Tamil literature. But by the time of Aruṇakiri, Vaḷḷi has become the most important "goddess" associated with Murukaṉ in the Tamil imagination.

In the "orthodox" myth (cf. Skanda Purāṇa Sthānava Vaibhava Kāṇḍa Jayantipura Māhātmya, chapters VI-VIII) written probably between the 12th and 15th centuries Vaḷḷi and Devasenā are depicted as daughters of Viṣṇu in an earlier life. Vaḷḷi, because of her *hybris*, is made to be born of a deer and raised by hunters. She is a lowcaste, yet beautiful and chaste, damsel of the hunting community. Murukaṉ woos her and weds her. The god's love for Vaḷḷi is celebrated within Śaivism as evidence of his grace for even the lowliest of persons, his identifying with Tamil country, his freedom to break out of social conventions (which suggest one should be married to but one wife), and yet his freedom from being unduly attracted to Vaḷḷi. Most commonly, Murukaṉ's relationship to Vaḷḷi seen as a paradigm of man's relationship to god. Aruṇakiri uses the divine love affair as metaphor of the delight, ecstasy, vivacity, totality, and mutuality of the religious experience.

Stanzas 7 and 8:

Several basic elements in the Śaiva religious experience are expressed in these two stanzas: giving implies not only the giving of alms, but the commitment of oneself to the God; the burning (*cuṭuāvy*) of self-orientation or literally, burning the suffering caused by

self-orientation (*neṭuvētaṉai*) is related to the long-standing tradition of *tapas*, the application of heat (*viṭuvay*) as in the sacrifical fire or in inner austerity; abandoning of *karma* or action (*viṉai*); and eliminating the tendency to think in terms of "I" and "mine", that is, identifying I with the material self (the body etc.) and overvaluing one's possessions by referring to them as "mine"

Stanza eight makes one of the relatively infrequent allusions in Aruṇakiri to Pārvatī's role in Skanda's birth; in some Epic literature (cf. Kalidāsa's Kumāraśambhava) she is said to have appeared before the meditating Śiva and eventually to have wed him, though she "adopts" the son of Śiva rather than "bears" him.

Stanza 9:

One of the exploits of the young Skanda was splitting the mountain, sometimes personified as the demonic Krauñca. According to one myth Krauñca was a lieutenant of Tāraka who playfully assumed the form of a mountain to trap passersby When the sage Agastya was so trapped on his journey southward, he cursed Krauñca to remain a mountain. The mountain here represents chaos; primordiality; the uncertainties and travails of travel; provincialism.

The poet here contrasted the god's character with his own through the imagery of mobility. The god's mobility is cosmic, absolutely free, bound by no barriers, yet, though free to move, the god is "quiescent" (*niṭṭū*) and at rest; the poet's mobility, on the other hand, is oscillation, as in a swinging net (*valai paṭṭū*), bounded by the restrictions of his own infatuations. It leads not to quiescence but to mental tumult. Similarly, the god's love is free grace (V.6), joyous

and delightful; the poet's "love" is the net of lust entrapping him by its own unquenchable thirst.

Stanza 10 :

The *asura - s* Valāri and Talāri once defeated Indra in battle, but were tricked by Indra and eventually destroyed For this treatment of the *asura* allies Indra was tormented by Sūrapadma In Sūrapadma's battle with Skanda, the *asura* hid in the ocean in the form of a tree until he was destroyed by the god.

Stanza 11 :

This allusion to the poet's pending death is apparently a reference to his conversion at Tiruvaṇṇāmalai just in time to prevent his suicide.

Snake mountain is apparently a reference to Tiruchenkōṭu a Śaiva shrine in Tamil Nadu.

Stanza 12 :

This is one of the most widely-quoted and beloved stanzas of the *Kantaranupūti* The phrase "*cummā iru collaṟa*" literally, "be still without speaking" is said to be the quintessence of the Śaiva experience. The term *collaṟa* (literally, "without speaking") is more appropriately translated "without thinking" as *col* refers to the formation of words and conceptions. The process of verbalizing and conceptualizing becomes irrelevant in the experience of the divine This "silence" pervades the entire person - mind and body as well as spirit.

Stanza 13 :

The last two lines of this stanza show Aruṇakiri's style especially well : alliteration, meter and rhythm combine economically and meaningfully in a suggestive couplet :

uruvaṉṟ	aruvaṉṟ	uḷataṉṟ	ilataṉṟ
iruḷaṉṟ	oḷiyaṉṟ	eṉaniṉṟ	atuvē

(that which is)

Formed	formless	having	not having
darkness	light	surely stands alone	

Stanza 15

Murukaṉ is addressed as lord of the five cosmic elements and eight attributes of divinity.

Stanza 16 :

The Śaiva concept of evil understands the *asura s* as symbols of personal and cosmic malaise. In some myths there is one *asura* taken to be the embodiment of evil; others speak of three *asura s*, thought within Śaivism to be representations of the three *malas* or basic bonds *(pāca)* by which all souls are confined : *āṇava* - ego - centricity or ignorance; *māyā* - the overvaluing of the phenomenal world; *karma*- the law of cause and effect. The most basic and persistent of these evils is *āṇava*, personified by Cūrapadma. *Āṇava* connotes self-orientation and leads to directionlessness and loss of meaning. It is to this basic problem the poet refers in this stanza.

Stanza 18:

Allusion is made to the myth wherein Śiva, called Vimalaṉ (sinless one), grows, in the form of a pillar. beyond the reach of Brahmā and Viṣṇū; the myth, recorded in the Śiva-Purāṇa and elsewhere, establishes Śiva's superiority over the gods.

Thi is the only stanza in the *Kantaranupūti* given exclusively to extolation of the god. No boon is requested, no

reference to the poet made. Partially because of this variation in style, some commentators (*e.g.*, A.S. Gnanasambandan) think this stanza to be a later interpolation. Others, like N.V Karthikeyan, think this stanza to be the highest form of praise.

Stanza 19.

This stanza also evokes disagreement in interpretation. Some commentators, like A.S. Gnanasambandan, on the grounds that its style and insight are inferior, think the stanza is not of Aruṇakiri's hand, but a later interpolation. At the least it expresses the poet's frustration. Other commentators (cf. N.V. Karthikeyan) suggest poverty refers here not only to material poverty but also to moral and spiritual poverty. Addressing Murukaṉ as "king with the incisive lance" thus assumes a dual meaning: a king is the opposite of a pauper; the lance (*vēl)* is the instrument of saving grace. Note also the difference between poverty *[miṭi)* and freedom from possessions. Wanting to have is related in Śaiva hought to the primary bond of life, *āṇava*-self-orientation-whereas not wanting to have implies mastery of one's priorities and makes it possible for others not having to want!

Stanza 20 :

Upatēcam ("teaching") actually connotes the imparting of spiritual insight as in a *mantra* or esoteric doctrine. The god is depicted as both the essence of sacred Truth and its purveyor.

Stanza 21 :

Note the play with the number two in this stanza.

Stanza 22 :

Meru is the mountain which centers the socmos; Kumāran is the eternally young Son. The Bull *(Kāḷai)* is a

reference to Śiva, whose vehicle is the bull, but also represents such qualities as sturdiness, power, and virility.

Stanza 23 :

The Kuravas were the hunting tribe by whom Vaḷḷi (literally "creeper") is said to have been raised.

Stanza 25 ,

Murukaṉ is also known as Ceyyōṉ (the red one) in Tamil literature, and is usually depicted as red. In myth he is associated with the fire of the sacrifice, the sun, the lotus. Redness in these various symbols connotes primordiality, enlightenment. immortality.

Stanza 27 :

Here "luster" serves as the contrasting image. *Miṉ* is the "flash" — the temporary sparkle-which characterizes this life. The splendor of the god, on the other hand, is that of a gem or gold. *Poruḷ* ("wealth") also means "truth" "reality" or "meaning". *Maṇi* (gem) also means "beauty" or "goodness". *Poṉ* (gold) also means "beauty" or "brilliance". Murukaṉ is frequently associated with gold in mythology (cf. Mahābhārata Śanti Parva 46– 47). *Gaṅgeya*, (Son of Gaṅga) a Sanskrit name ascribed to Murukaṉ, is also a term for gold. Skanda is also the *hiraṇyagarbha* (the golden seed of which the world was formed). Gold like red implies immortality, primordiality, enlightenment.

Stanza 28 :

Viḻuṅki, here translated "swallow" for alliterative purposes, means to devour or consume as though to eliminate "me" and "mine" as opposed to *ayil*-to eat or partake of them as if for enjoyment.

Stanza 29 :

Aṟiyāmai poṟuttilaiyē - here translated "you don't tolerate the trifles", more precisely translated might read: "you don't pardon the ignorance".

The "shining" (*cuṭar*) in "shining lance" has the multiple significance of light: bright, enlightening, splendid, creative.

Stanza 32 :

Kalai ("learning") is, in fact, the standard fare of education: philosophy, arts, sciences. The frustration expressed is not only with the process of learning these disciplines but with its relative uselessness, as compared to the saving value of spiritual insight.

Stanza 33 :

The allusion is literally to the Vinḏhyā forest, an enchanting, but impenetrable barrier in central India often understood geographically to be the boundary of North and South, and symbolically, in the North, as the boundaries of civilization. Murukaṉ is depicted as He who is the master of forest. He is also lord of the mountain. Indeed, in one myth, (cf. Ramāyāṇa Balakāṇḍa 36, 37) Skanda is said to have emerged from the earth as a mountain.

Stanza 34 :

Again, the polarities of the stanza seem understated in translation: especially those of "sumptuous" or "ornamental" (ciṅkāra) women vs. the goddess Ganga; and purifying celestial river vs. flames of passion. Perhaps implied in the stanza is the contrast between Ṣaṇmukaṉ as integrating son of six divine genealogies and the poet as the potential sire of several illegitimate heirs.

Stanza 36 :

Myth has it that Murukaṉ once jailed Brahmā in play because the latter did not know the meaning of the sacred syllable. Śiva came to his son, Murukaṉ, to plead for Brahmā's release only to be asked if he Śiva, knew the mystic truth of *ōm*. Śiva had to inquire of his son as to its meaning.

Stanza 39:

The three "lusts" are for children; women; and wealth; the seven births are those of gods, humans, animals, grass, reptiles, marine creatures, and earth.

Stanza 40 :

It is probable that by the term *maṉai*, here translated "my house", the poet was referring to home life. I have here translated with the term "house", however, to broaden the implications to accommodate those Śaiva commentators who argue the term 'house", can also include body, *māyā*, and other bonds in which man is "bogged down".

Stanza 42 :

This is a stanza rendered especially difficult to translate by the poet's skill in sonority and alliteration. The consonant ṟ, with its variations, is the key sound repeated throughout. The verb *aṟu* (to cut off, break) is used four times to refer to the poet's attitude to the "world" : the term denotes a decisive, conclusive break. *aṟi* (to know, understand) is the peg around which the poet discusses forms of "knowing": *aṟivu* (knowledge) *aṟiyāmai* (not knowing) are both forms of mundane existence in contrast to the spiritual wisdom afforded by the deity.

Stanza 43:

The term, here translated "Silent Bilss" "*pēc anupūti*, literally, "wordless spiritual experience" This stanza is the only one in which the term *anupūti* is repeated.

Stanza 46:

The poet's play with the theme of sonship follows a long-standing Śaiva tradition. Murukaṉ is addressed as both mother and father in a manner consistent with the language used by earlier Tamil poets like Campantanār and Appar, with respect to Śiva: cf. "You alone are mother; you alone are father, O Śivaṉ" (Campantar, 1-50.7); Appar writes '·you are mother; you father" (6-95.1).

Stanza 47:

The term *āṟ āṟai* (literally "six six") here translated the thirty-six, is a probable reference to the thirty-six categories or *tattuva*-s. That is an interpretation consistent with the persistent tradition of Tamil literature and Śaiva Siddhānta.

The thirty-six categories or *tattuva*-s are the entities by which human experience is limited. These include twenty-four "material" *(acutta) tattuva-s* and seven partially "immaterial" (*cuttā-cuttā*) *tattuva-s*, and five "immaterial" or spiritual *tattuva-s*. The twenty-four are as follows: the five elements (earth) water, fire, air, sky) ; the five organs of sense (body, mouth, eye, nose, ear) ; the organs of motor action (speech, foot, hand, buttocks, genitals) ; subtle elements from which the major elements are produced (sound, touch, form, flavor *(racam)*, odor ; four aspects of inner thought, feeling and volition : mind *(maṉam)*, having reference to will, intention or desire; intelligence *(putti)*, having reference to understanding, reason, intellect, and consciousness ; pride *(akaṅkaram)* or sense of self-will and egocentricity ; will *(cittam)* or sense of purpose

The seven "semi-material" *tattuva-s* are as follows: time (*Kalā*); destiny (*nyati*); volition (*Kalā*) or literally, that which reduces slightly the power of *aṇava mala* (the bond of ignorance) so that the soul (*pacu*) can act; *vityā* (discrimination); desire (*arāka*), literally, that which excites desire in the soul; "inertia", *puruṭa*, a category present in the soul which has all three bonds; and origin or cause (*mūla*), literally, the unmanifest primordial cause of the material world.

The five "immaterial" or "spiritual" categories are: a) learning (*vittai*) specifically the dimensions of time, fate, science, the arts, desire, soul, and matter; b) astrology (*iccuram*); c) music (*cātākkiyam*); d) power (*catti*); and e) spiritual wisdom (*civañāṉam*).

One commentator, N.V. Karthikeyan, suggests that *āṟu āṟu* may be understood more ambiguously. The term *āṟu* can also mean "river", "way", "virtue", et al. The context then might be translated: ... could I ... attain that station beyond the six ways; as though the poet were referring to the traditional six religious systems of Hinduism. Or again, the "six rivers" could refer geographically to India and to "that station" as transcending geographical bounds.

Notes — Kantaralaṅkāram

Stanza 4:

The diversionary role of the senses in the religious experience is a common theme in Tamil Śaiva *bhakti*, sounded both before and after Aruṇakiri. See, for example, Appar 4-76-10 or the seventeenth century poem, Kantar Kali Veṇpā. There is a hint in this stanza that the *curaṉ*, described in

this stanza as an adulterous thief (*cōram*), and destroyed by the god, is identified with the senses.

Stanza 5:

There is an intimation in this stanza of that poetic style known as *piḷḷaittamiḻ*. The child god is like the world. The world and he are born of the goddess. His craving for the goddess of life and the sustenance of the goddess is like that of the world's own craving But there is irony here, for the weeping of sea, mountains, and demons is not the same as the child god's; rather, their weeping is caused by him, for as he grows to manhood he routs the demons and makes sea and mountain subservient to himself.

Stanza 6:

Some Śaiva commentators understand Murukaṉ's 'fondling of Vaḷḷi's breasts" allegorically. V.S. Ceṅkalvarāya Piḷḷai, for example, suggests that the breast of the innocent damsel (*pētai:* innocence; *koṅkai:* breast) represents the maturation of life, equating *pētai* to *uyir* (life) and *koṅkai* to *pakkuvam* (maturation). The allegorical interpretation is taken further to suggest that the millet fields over which the "damsel "Vaḷḷi" ' watches" represents the world and the treasures of worldly existence Hence, millet (*puṉam)* is equated to the world *(ulak am)* and green grain (*ēṉal*) is equated to earth (*maṇ*), wealth (*poṉ)* and women (*peṇ*). Similarly, sugar cane (*karumpu*) and honey (*tēṉ)* are equated to sensual pleasures (*viṣuyānantam)* Thus, Murukaṉ's loving of Vaḷḷi is said to represent his devotion to that devotee who "matures" and is freed from attachment to the world and its pleasures. (V. S. Cenkalvarāya Piḷḷai, *op. cit* p. 9).

Stanza 7 :

The gambloing of the demons in the *asura-s'* blood so olorfully described in this stanza is largely a product of

the poet's love of alliteration : *Kuḷattiṟ kuḷittuk kuḷittuḷ kaḷittuk kuṭittu veṟṟik kaḷittiṟ cerukki kaḻ uṭaṭa* Literally translated, this line would read : demons dance, taking pride, in the field of the victorious battle, drinking, enjoying, bathing, jumping in the pond (...... of blood).

Stanza 8 :

Veṟum pāḻ, here translated "Emptiness" is literally the "empty expanse" which in Tamil Śaivism is equated to *nāta*, the cosmogonic sound, foundation of creation, and essence of Divinity. Actually, the poet here writes that the 'empty expanse" originates in or arises from (*viḷainta*) the space (*veḷi*) in primordial sound (*nāta*).

Stanza 10 :

The term translated "quiescence' is *cummā iruttal*, the famed phrase "being still" found often in Aruṇakiri (cf. Kantaranupūti 12)

Vēlaṉ. another name for Murukaṉ, means "the bearer of the lance" or "Lancer"

This is a clever stanza in the Tamil with its alliteration of **K's** and V's and its double and triple analogies.

Stanza 15 :

The reference, of course, is to Viṣṇu's incarnation as the dwarf Vāmana who tricked Māvali into granting three steps of space. The three encompassed earth, heavens, and nether regions. In a similar way, the touch of Murukaṉ's feet works miracles There is frequent reference in these stanzas (cf. 17,20) to the Lord's feet as the locus of the religious experience.

Stanza 19 :

The *guṇa-s* or characteristics of experience were developed in Saṁkhya thought and adapted into Śaivism. The three *guṇa-s* are *sattva* (brightness), *rajas* (passion), and *tamas* (inertia).

Stanza 21 :

To save the *tāli*, or marriage cord, of a wife is an idiom for saving the life of her husband. In this case, the allusion is to Skanda's saving the life of Indra from hordes of malevolent spirits (*graha-s*) (cf. Mahābhārate III : 223ff).

Stanza 22 :

This stanza, like others in the Kantaralaṅkāram (cf. 11—13), invokes no request of the deity, nor does it dwell on the state of the poet. It is purely an utterance of praise for the god and a rememberance of his exploits. The first allusion is to Rāmā's destruction of the ten-headed Rāvana. The latter allusion is to the three arts of the Tamil language (*iyal*– literature; *icai*—music; and *natakam* – drama) and to the practice of using these arts, however beautiful, for self-aggrandizement or show rather than for praise of god Aruṇakiri here implies his love for the Tamil language and his assumption that the Tamil arts are inspired of Murukaṉ He shares with many Tamil *bhaktas* the belief that Tamil is aptly suited as a "language of devotion".

Some commentators, like V.A. Devasenapathi, and Ceṅkalvarāya Piḷḷai, suggest this allusion also refers to the

character of Vaḷḷi who, though she scolded Murukaṉ in words and mime, was nonetheless loved by him. So too the gods' love for fickle devotees.

Stanza 4:

What is the secret "published aloud" (*Kēṭkacoṉṉa*) to the poet in Murukaṉ's wooing of Vaḷḷi? Spme commentators (cf. V S. Ceṅkalvarāya Pillai (*op cit.*, p. 25) suggest it is the message conveyed in the very act of Murukan's wooing Vaḷḷi - namely that the god appears even to the most simple and loves and accepts them.

The usual pattern for the imparting of esoteric truth is for a *guru* to whisper the message into the ear of his disciple In this stanza the poet speaks of Murukaṉ's dalliance with Vaḷḷi as a public proclamation of his grace obvious to all who will see and hear.

Stanza 30:

The images describing women are common to Tamil poetry. The *cēḷ* is a fish which jumps from place to place. The image is also used in such passages as Tiruppukaḻ 328 Kampan's Rāmāyana 70 "milk-like voice" and "cotton feet" appear elsewhere in Aruṇakiri: for example, Tiruppukaḻ 825 and 26, respectively

Stanza 31

"*Vēl*-lord", is an alternate translation for the Tamil *Vēlaṉ* or *Vēlavaṉ*, the most common epitaph used for the deity in these two anthologies of Aruṇakiri. The term *vēl*, most usually translated "lance", nonetheless, has its own peculiar symbolism in Tamil *bhakti* literature (cf notes for Kantaranupūti 1).

The "liberation" (*viṭu*) to be found at Murukaṉ's feet is the Tamil Śaiva alternative for the Sanskrit *mokṣa*.

Stanza 36 :

The *Kāveri*, sacred river *parexcellence* of Tamil Nadu, receives the offering of ivory jewellery from devotees even as it fertilizes and sacralizes the land. Its benevolence is contrasted with the unpredictable and wilful nature of the love of money

Stanza 40:

This is a difficult yet delightful stanza. The "destruction" of four entities is described with the use in each line of the phrase *paṭṭaḻintatu* — "destroying. damaging, or eliminating upon touching". The images are rich, moving from the sights and sounds of Tamil Nadu in the first two lines to the spiritual or philosophical ones in the last two Line one speaks of the lush. wet fields of Tirucceṉṯūr along the southeastern coast which are destroyed by marauding *cēl* fish. Yet *cēl* is a common metaphor for the darting eyes of "unscrupulous women", and the reader is left wondering whether the poet intended a double meaning in this line, suggesting that the flourishing life is destroyed by such women. Line two speaks of the saving features of the honey from blossoms of the *Kaṭampu* tree The *Kaṭampu* is a tree especially associated with Murukaṉ. The "lust" which is removed could be translated either as the lust *for* woman or the lust *of* women. The "signature of Brahmā" mentioned in line four is, of course, a reference to fate and to the myth that the creator Brahmā predetermines on the basis of each person's accumulated *Karma*, his or her destiny The grace of Muruka of overrides such predestination. The stanza is a celebration of freedom

Stanza 41 :

Mālōṉ is a Tamil name for Viṣṇu, used even in the earliest known Tamil literature The "many-hooded snake" refers to *āticēṭa*, the cosmogonic serpent.

Stanza 43 :

Allusion is made to the popular belief that snakes do not have eyes but rather have ears sharp enough to compensate. The final allusion is to Rāmā's building a bridge to Śri Lanka, helped by the monkey-army of *cukrīvan,* to recapture his wife and destroy Rāvaṇa The term *marukan* here translated "nephew" can also mean "son in law" Myths speak of Murukaṉ as both nephew and son-in law of Viṣṇu, as his mother Umā was Viṣṇu's sister and his consorts were Viṣṇu's daugters

Stanza 48 :

The ancient *(mutu) cura* the poet wants to 'scare' *(naṭunka)* is said, by some Śaiva interpreters (eg. A S Gnanasambandan) to be the persistent evil known as *āṇava* or ego consciousness. *Āṇava* is the first, most basic, and most pertinacious of the bonds or *mala-s* of life.

Stanza 50 :

'I shall cherish the widely read Tiruppukaḻ" *(paṭikkun tiruppukaḻ pōṟṟuvan)* seems to confirm what is generally assumed that the present anthology is written after the Tiruppukaḻ and is already well known and studied *(paṭikkum* literally means "studied"*)* This clause even seems to encourage speculation that the two works are by two different authors, separated in time by a generation or more Yet such commentators as V. A Devasenapathi suggest that

the term the term *tiruppukaḻ* can refer much more generally to "hymns" and not necessarily to the collection known as Tiruppukaḻ.

The earlier reference is to Kṛṣṇa's dancing on the snake known as *kāḷiṅka*.

Stanza 51 :

"Perform penance" *(mātavaṉ cey)* might be literally translated 'do great *tapas*" as *tavam* is a Tamil equivalent for the Sanskrit *tapas* *Tapas*, of course, connotes the whole heritage of spiritual "heat"—fire, austerity, 'burning of" of *karma*, etc.

The "raw" *(ilaiyāṉa)* and the cooked *(venta)* is an interesting contrast, implying as Lévi-Strauss has suggested, the contrast between nature and culture The one is the natural, the pure, the potential; the latter represents the fullness of man's effort and achievement.

Stanza 53 :

Murukaṉ's "yearning" *(virumpum)* for Vaḷḷi's breasts is a positive longing—a centering of attention, a liberating singleness of purpose. The "yearning" *(kilēcittu)* of missers for more wealth is anxious, debilitating, and grief-giving.

Stanza 55 :

Āṅkāra (here translated "self-orientation") is difficult to match with a precise English term. Arrogance and self-centeredness are implied, as expressed in the Greek *hybris*; perhaps the awkward term "ego-consciousness" is nearer the mark as *āṅkāra* expresses the self's persistence in taking itself seriously, to be aware of I as a conscious, wilful, needy

entity. In Śaivism this very consciousness is at the heart of the human predicament.

Niṉaippu (consciousness, thought, or remembering) and *maṟappu* (forgetfulness) are both functions of self-conscious existence.

Stanza 58 :

The allusion to Śiva's destruction of Kāma, the divine love-maker, is a theme found in versions of Skanda's birth especially in late Epic literature, for example, in Kalidāsa's Kumāraśambhava. The *deva*-s, eagar to have a son by the celibate Śiva, arrange to have the beautiful Umā appear before the great yogin while he is in lonely *tapas* At the same time Kāma appears ready to shoot an arrow of love into Śiva's heart. But Śiva, only momentarily entranced, destroys Kāma with a spark from his forehead.

Kāma's arrows are comprised of five flowers, each symbolic of forms of love The specific reference here is to the flower *mullai*, a kind of jasmine. The other flowers are mango blossom (*māmpū*), lotus (*tāmarai*), Aśoka blossom (*acōku*), and a rose-like bud (*nīlam*) (cf. V. S. Ceṅkalvarāya Piḷḷai, *op.cit.*, p.57)

Stanza 59 :

The allusion is to Murukaṉ's destruction of the *cūra* as it hid in the sea The poet uses a single homophonous phrase to convey this episode : *vēlaiyil vēlai viṭṭōṉ* literally who threw the lance into the sea.

Stanza 63 :

The reference to the "Lord . . . whose half is green" is to Śiva in his androgynous form Artanārīśvara wherein the left side is the green Pārvatī.

Stanza 67 :

The allusion to the "sweet damsel" is probably to Devasenā, as V S Ceṅkalvarāya Piḷḷai suggests (*op. cit.*, pp 65-66); the phrase *caracavalli*, litterally pleasant tempered ' cree per" or woman, apparently refers to the belief recorded in a southern rescension of the Skanda Purāṇa that in primordial times, both Devasenā and Vaḷḷi were married to Skanda but while the latter, being younger, was often jealous of her husband's love the former was even tempered and patient with both her husband and co-spouse.

While in Epic sources Devasenā is the daughter of Indra in Tamil variations of her story. she is called Dēvayāṉai (divine elephant) as she is believed to have been reborn into the family of one Irāvatam or, as the poet calls him here, Cayil an elephant who was a fearless battler.

Stanza 72:

Why the poet refers in this work to the manifestation of Skanda at Ceṅkoṭu or Tiruchenkoṭu more often than to any other pilgrimage center is somewhat puzzling as there is no known relationship between Aruṇakiri and this place. Indeed, it is known now more as a holystead of Śiva than of Skanda.

Stanza 73;

The terms used for the religious experience here suggest that an indefinite one (*ōṉṟu*) relentlessly comes (*vantu vantu*) and "assaults" (*tākku*) the poet's mind, giving of its own initiative (*tāṉē tarum*) a new state of mind (*manōlaya*). Not only is grace divinely initiated, says the poet; it is persistent and forceful, breaking down the receiver's stubbornness and obtuseness (ie. Francis Thompson's *The Hound of Heaven*).

The language used here describing the experience is common to the canons of Śaiva *bhakti* For example, the phrase "coming and going" (*pōkkum varavum*), connoting creation and decay, birth and death as a polarity to be found in mundane existence but not in the spiritual state is used in the eighth or ninth century Tiruvācakam of Māṇikkavācakar and in the seventeenth century *Kantar Kali Veṇpā* (21).

Stanzea 174 :

The phrase "in freed love" (*avilnta aṉpār*) implies a love freed from the consciousness of "I" and "mine".

The flowers in Murukaṉ's anklets are the *kurā*, an especially fragrant shrub ; the ankle bracelet is the *taṉlai*, an anklet with attached bells.

Stanza 175 :

The poet is addressing the seat of his emotion and personhood (*neñca*,) his conscience, rather than his intellect, as the tranaslation "mind" might suggest.

Paḻani is one of the sacred centers of the Murukaṉ cultus in Tamil Nadu. Murukaṉ is believed to have appeared on top of one of the hills in Paḻani as an ascetic. Myth has it that Śiva and Pārvati promised to whichever of their two sons could circle the world first would be given a fruit symbolic of supremacy. Murukaṉ set out to circle the world on his peacock. The portly Gaṇeṣa, however, merely circled his parents saying : "You are the world". To Gaṇeṣa was given the fruit. Murukaṉ, upon hie return moments later, was enraged to hear what had happened and withdrew atop Paḻani's hill in pique. To assuage Murukaṉ's anger, Śiva said to him "You are the fruit" (Paḻam Nī) Hence,

to repeat the name of Paḻani is to extol Murukan̲ as the fruit and full extension of Śiva.

Stanza 79 :

Tiruttaṇi, now considered one of Murukan̲'s six sacred centers in Tamil Nadu is the hill where the mature Murukan̲ was believed to have settled down and from which his courtship of Vaḷḷi was conducted

Amarāvati is the city of the *deva*-s' kingdom, saved when Skanda destroyed the threatening asura-s.

Stanza 80 :

I have translated the phrase, the" ... Mountain of Sacrifice " (*yākapporuppai)* as a reference to Śivs, though it could also refer to the location where Śiva and Pārvati sit and, thence, where Skanda is born. The syntax in the original suggests the phrase is a reference to Siva himself However, the 'mouutain of sacrifice" could be a reference to the spot where' Śiva was doing *tapas* when Umā appeared before him. Subsequently, Skanda was born *on* a mountain in a thicket of *śara* grass, a reed used in the sacrifice (cf Mbh) III · 222–2 .) Skanda's birth is in many ways equated to the performance of the sacrifice and his birth place as a place of sacrifice. But, on the other hand, Skanda is also born *of* the sacrifice This is especially suggested in his genealogy of Agni in certain myths Agni and Śiva are eventually identified in the cultus. Whether the phrase "mountain of sacrifice" refers to Śiva (alias Agni) or to the place where Skanda is born, Skands's appearing like the sacrifice, makes possible liberation (*mukti)* that is pure (*sutta* and eternal (*nitta)*.

Stanza 81:

'The six women who became stars" is a reference to the Kṛttikās, who suckled Skanda after his birth, then asked him if he would make them into a constellation (cf. Mbh III.230)

Stanza 82:

The *Kaṭampu* is the red blossom of the *kaṭampu* tree, associated with Murukaṉ even in the earliest Tamil literature. Various red and yellow flowers are commonly linked to Murukaṉ in Tamil literature, suggesting their common association in Tamil imagery with fertility, vibrancy and festivity The red *Kaṭampu*, like the lotus, suggests primordiality and quiescence when at the "feet of the Lord"

Stanza 83 :

The *Kaḻal* is an anklet often given to a warrior as a token of honour.

Stanza 85 :

Reference is made to two yogic techniques with a touch of sarcasm *Viḻi nāci vaittu,* literally, "placing eyes on the nose" refers to the practice of focussing one's attention on the *ajña cakra,* that sacred spot between the eyebrows believed to be an opening to the macrocosm The poet's phrasing suggests he considers the practice impossible as well as unnecessary. The second practice is that of *prāṇayama,* "breath control"; in *prāṇayama,* the breath or "interior winds" is made to pass through its appropriate passages from its 'place of origin" (the *mūlātara cakra* Sanskrit, *mālādhara)* near the navel, to the base of the skull (*kapālam)* without permitting any of this air to escape from the body.

Stanza 86 :

The theme of this stanza is weaponry, each actor in the drama identified largely by his military paraphernalia. Yet by the medieval period the military imagery has been ascribed meaning that transcends the literal significance it had in the context of regal rivalry and warfare.

The poet alludes to the superiority of Śiva (he with trident) over Viṣṇu (god with conch and wheel) and Brahmā (the lotus-born) In a well-known Purāṇic Śaiva myth Viṣṇu and Brahmā, distressed at Śiva's claim to pre-eminence, set out to prove they are greater Viṣṇu, in the from of a boar. digs deep to extend lower than Śiva's influence extends; Brahmā as a bird, climbs upward. Śiva, assuming the form of a pillar, extends further than either of his rivals at each extremity.

Stanza 87 :

The phrase *caraṇam caraṇam,* here translated : "... at your feet we surrender, we surrender" ; is a common expression in Tamil *bhakti* poetry - the word has multiple meanings : feet, refuge or shelter, reverence or worship, and others. It aptly connotes the common image in Śaiva devotion of the feet of the Lord as the place where the religious experience ccurs.

Stanza 88 :

The deity is addressed *nirmalaṉē* (you who are without *mala-s)* The *malat s* in Śaiva thought are the three evil bonds by which every soul is bound : *āṇava* or ego consciousness; *māya* - overvaluing of phenomenal world; *karma* - law of cause and effect.

The graphic picture of a battleground after the god is victorious incorporates several long-standing Tamil images.

For example, the demons' dancing of the *tuṇaṅkai* dance, a dance usually associated with humans in which male and female alternate in a circle, is to be found in *caṅkam* and post-*caṅkam* references.

Stanza 89 :

According to myth, Murukaṉ chained Brahmā playfully for not knowing the meaning of the sacred syllable. The poet defies Brahmā, the personification of fate, to trouble him, a devotee of Murukaṉ, master of fate

Stanza 90 :

Brahmā is here called the four-faced one (*nāṉmukaṉ*); Mālōṉ is an ancient Tamil name for Viṣṇu and he who dances in open spaces is Śiva.

Stanza 92 :

The alliterative phoneme *ṇṭ* is repeated twenty-one times in this stanza Its effect is to enhance the staccato thunder of battle It may be significant that the gentlest phrase in the stanza reads : *irukkuñcutta ñāṉameṉuṉ* · " ... where is the pure nectar of wisdom" as if to suggest inbibing that elixir places one above the battles of life

Stanza 94 :

The same verb (*vēṭṭa* - crave, love, wed) is used to describe the poet's relationship to the lord's feet, as for Murukaṉ's relationship to Vaḷḷi

The word translated lips (*toṇṭai*) is actually a name for the Kovvai fruit, a fruit that grows on a vine, is red and shaped like lips and hence becomes a frequently used simile for the lips of women. Another simile apparently

with double meaning is *vaḷḷai taḷḷittuḷḷiya keṇṭaiyai* The line can read literally as translated : *Keṇṭai* is a form of river-fish frequently used as a simile for women's eyes *Vaḷḷai* is a type of creeper often used as simile to women's ears; in fact, *vaḷ* (of which *vaḷḷai* is the accusative) means ear Hence the fish "jumping" *(tuḷḷi)* or "nudging" *taḷḷi)* the creeper can also mean eyes "touching" ears, a reference to very long eyes, considered a mark of beauty in Tamil poetry.

Stanza 95 *:*

",Emptiness" is literally *taṉiveḷikkē* "solitary or unique space".

A basic Śaiva axiom is posited here which differentiates it from all Advaitin schools One who would attain the ultimate religious experience must realize the distinction between *yāṉ* (me) and *tāṉ* (him. that is, between *pati* (Lord) and *pacu* (soul) or between the cosmic essence *(paramātma)* and the personal essence *(jīvātma)* This basic Śaiva principle had been sounded frequently in Tamil literature (cf. Tirukkuṟal 246; Tiruvācakam 10.5; Tiruppukaḻ 460, 511; Kantaranapūti 28; *et al.).*

Stanza 96:

n singing of the peacock's cosmic power in terms of Purāṇsc cosmology, the poet's geography is nonetheless also centered in Tamil country and, therefore, can have ambiguous meaning For example, the "Northern mountain (*Vaṭakkil kiri*) probably refers to Meru, but could also refer to the Himalayas or Vindhyas Seas encircle the world in Purānic cosmology, but they also form the eastern and southern boundary to Tamil country. The golden *cakra* mountains *(kaṉaka cakra tiṭar)* probably are an allusion to the *cakravāḷa* range, a term used to refer to the visible horizon and to a mythical range

of mountains encircling the earth's orbit The term might also refer to the Western ghats over which the sun sets

Stanza 97 :

Not only is viṣṇu, who lies on Âtisēṣa the cosmic serpent at the mercy of Murukaṉ's mount So also is the primordial serpent itself. The red jewels in the serpent's mouth are "suns" spewed out each day from the "bowels" of the ocean The peacock's attacking of the serpent is therefore a cosmogonic image.

Stanza 101-107 :

There seems little doubt that the last seven stanzas are written by a later poet This is explicit in the reference in stanza 101 to the earlier hundred stanzas. It is implicit in both style and message of the succeeding stanzas While the meter remains the same, there is far less clever use of sound and syntax Nor is there as much substance to the message of these stanzas: there is less creativity, ambiguity, or profundity and less use of suggestive words and images. The stanzas may have been added to round out the anthology to the traditional number either replacing or adding to the stanzas more probably ascribed to Aruṇakiri.

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